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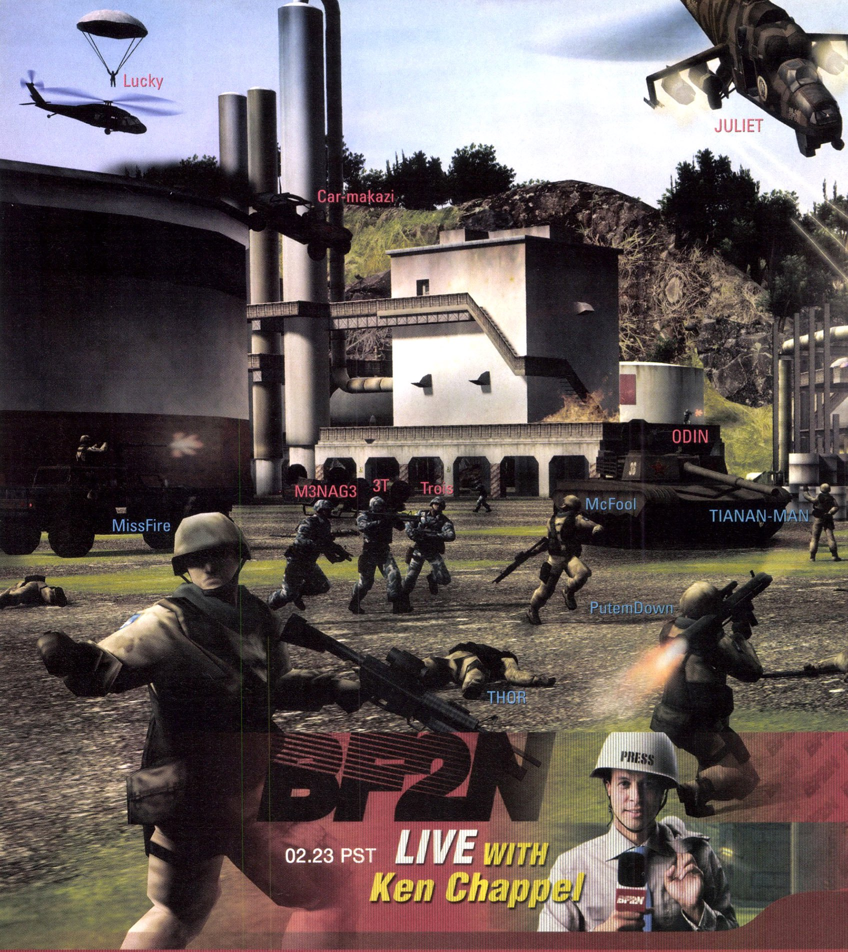
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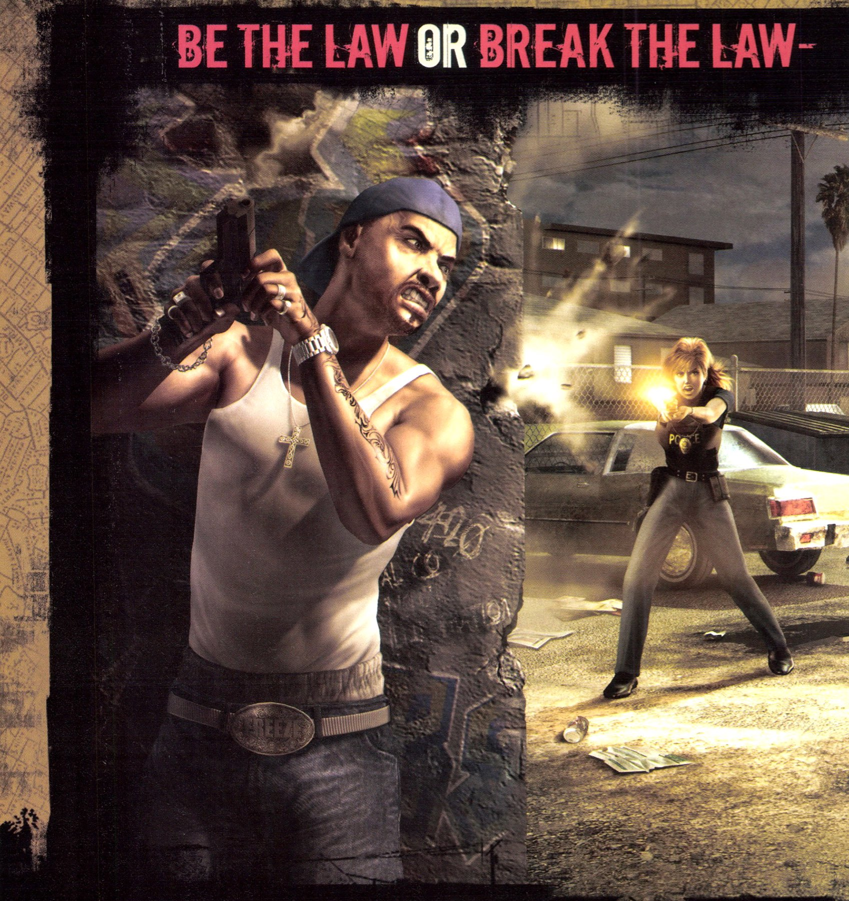
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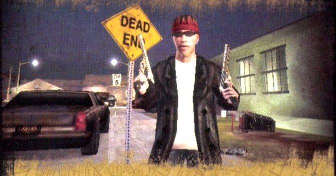

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SHADOWOFTHECOLOSSUS.1UP.COM

1UP's got more of what you love about *Shadow of the Colossus*—check out more exclusive screens, listen to music from the game's soundtrack, and read our full interview with Fumito Ueda!

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Who's going to win the next generation? Well, if we knew the answer to that, we probably wouldn't want to tell you because it could spoil our opportunity to make a lot of money. But we can offer you pretty educated guesses on how the PlayStation 3 will fare—go here to find out what we think.

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Want an insight into the deepest recesses of Scooter's brain? Well, actually, no—trust us, you don't. But to see what he thinks about the Hot Coffee scandal and to find out if he had fun at his wedding and honeymoon, pay him a visit.

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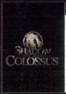


SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

If you want to see if this big, beautiful, awe-inspiring game is your cup of tea, then try this level in which you must take down a colossus.

BURNOUT REVENGE

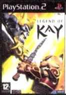
We used to find slamming people off the road therapeutic, but now that we've played *Revenge*, only vertical takedowns satisfy us.

THE SUFFERING: TTB

Torque is back and he's still mad, which could explain all those buckets of blood and gore that he's leaving in his wake.

L.A. RUSH

In addition to providing classic arcade racing, *L.A. Rush* also lets you cruise all over the freeways of the City of Angels. Shotgun!



LEGEND OF KAY

Check out what kind of moves you'd have if you were a ninja cat, and then go read the review on page 102 to see what we think.

ONE PIECE: GRAND BATTLE

If games like *Urban Reign* are too gritty for your taste, then give this cartoony fighting game with interactive environments a whirl.

WATCH IT

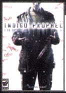
AND DON'T MISS
a couple of more awesome trailers for *SLAI: Steel Lancer Arena International* and *Moto GP 4*!

SW BATTLEFRONT II

Watch the video for this sequel to last year's popular online shooter, and then go to page 70 for our exclusive preview of what's new!

BLITZ: THE LEAGUE

If *Madden* is just a little too tame for your blood, then check out the video for Midway's bone-crunching football alternative.



INDIGO PROPHECY

Floating ghostly figures, people tumbling from roofs, kickboxing—find all this and more in a music video showcasing the upcoming thriller.

RADIATA STORIES

What do childlike characters with big eyes who wield swords make you think of? If you guessed a Japanese RPG, then you were right!

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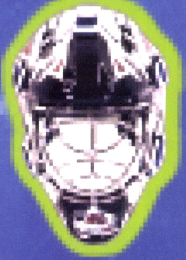

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OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE
GAME OF THE MONTH

REVIEWS

98>

SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

TEAM ICO DOES IT AGAIN

RATING KEY
Octagons. Stomps. Ocs. Blargs. Call our rating symbols what you will—just know that any game that receives five of 'em is something truly special that deserves a spot in your collection. On the other hand, a 2.5 is merely mediocre. And a 0.5? Well…at least they're fun to rip apart.

[●●●●●]

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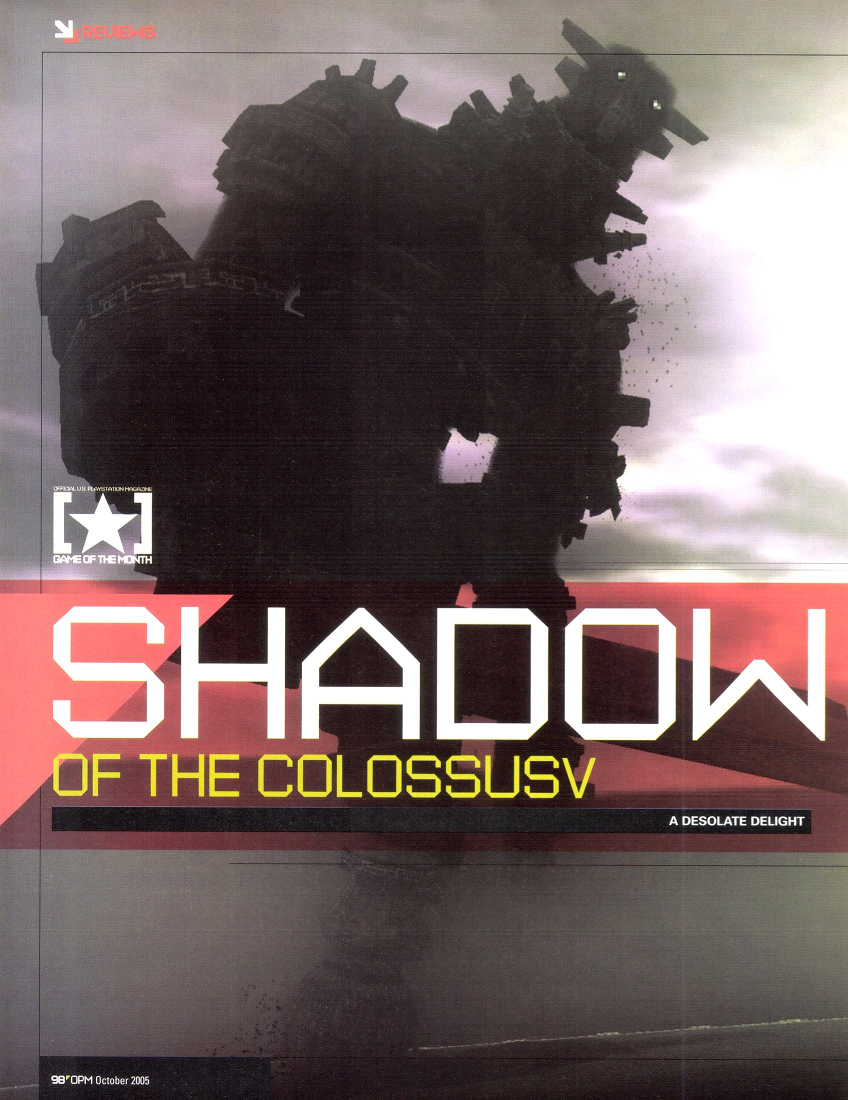


OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

GAME OF THE MONTH

SHADOW

OF THE COLOSSUSV

A DESOLATE DELIGHT

TAKING A COLOSSUS DOWN IS EXHILARATING.

In this industry, there are good games, there are great games, and then there are those games that almost seem to transcend statements of quality. *Half-Life* is a great shooter. *Ratchet & Clank* is a great platformer. *Gran Turismo* is a great racer. But when you're talking about games like *Rez* or *Ico* or even *Katamari Damacy*, you're talking about games for which the question of quality is not so easily answered. You're moving beyond mere mechanics; you're talking about art.

Shadow of the Colossus is such a game. Part platformer, part puzzle game, part adventure game, and part virtual vacation, it defies mere classification, almost daring you to try. How to describe it? At its core, perhaps, the game is quite simple: a series of 16 of the most jaw-dropping boss battles you've ever seen.

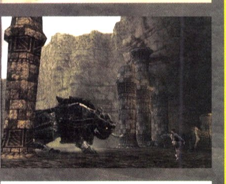
And oh, they are jaw dropping. Go up against the one colossus on this month's disc and you may think you know what the battles will be like. You do not. While the climb-up-and-slay mechanic is certainly repeated, the vast majority of colossi require widely varied tactics to bring down. Here's where things get tough: I can't really describe for you the process of beating any of these brutes, because figuring out how to do so is at least 50 percent of the game. I would be slapping you with a brutal spoiler if I offered details on even one. Generalities must be the order of the day.

So, *generally* speaking, a colossus battle consists of two parts: figuring out what you need to do to bring the bad boy down and then doing it. OK, perhaps we'll get a bit more specific than that. Basically, most battles involve attacking a colossus' weak spots, usually to cause it to do something to give you access to its vital organs. Let's not forget, though, that these are very, very big creatures, so reaching those weak spots and vitals generally requires some pretty advanced acrobatics—climbing the beast's fur, hanging on to odd protuberances in its armor, jumping from limb to limb, and so on. Each step needs to be planned in advance, so there's a cerebral element to it...but then you need to actually execute the plan, so there are reflexes involved, too. Aside from these general similarities, each battle is different, which means each battle requires you to learn an all-new strategy. Yes, it can get frustrating (more on that later), but given the enormous size of these creatures, their distinct personalities, and the sheer beauty of their design and animation, actually taking one down is exhilarating.

The trouble is that, as impressive as these boss battles are, and as much time as they may take to complete (my final save reported 25 hours of play time, but, of course, your mileage may vary), boss battles are *all there is* to this game. It's hard to know how to feel about that. On the one hand, you've got this staggeringly beautiful world to explore to your heart's content...and on the other hand, there's *nothing in it* (well, except for a few birds, some lizards, one horse—and, oh yeah, 16 enormous beasts). Aside from colossus hunting, there is literally nothing else to do in the game but simply explore.

On the surface that may sound like a colossal (ha!) bore. And if you, like me, were expecting to find something, anything else to do in the game, you may find this empty world disappointing. But here's the thing: There are parts of the world you will never see if you just go from colossus to colossus...but they are every bit as intricate, detailed, and beautiful as the areas that get the most traffic. And with no time constraints or other arbitrary restrictions,

SHADOW IS NOT A GAME FOR EVERYONE.



you're free to spend as much time as you want hunting down beautiful seaside vistas, desolate desert wastelands, or intriguing ruins that are there for absolutely no reason except to be found in exactly such a way. This is the virtual vacation I mentioned, and it's an indicator of the designers' priorities: Make it beautiful—make it art—even if it has absolutely no bearing on the gameplay itself. So while, yes, it is disappointing and feels a bit desolate, I can't help but feel a certain admiration.

At least there's an acknowledgement of the desolation in what passes for a story here. I say "what passes for" because, as in *Ico*, the player is given only part of the story. What is the relationship between the wanderer and the girl he is trying to save? Where do they come from? Why, exactly, is this world so empty? You'll have to draw your own conclusions, because the game won't tell you. This goes double for the closing moments of the game. Again, I will give you no details, but suffice it to say that I found it moving, provocative, and satisfying in its grandness...even though the game utterly thwarted any dream of having all the story's ambiguities tied up with a convenient bow.

This sparse, unresolved story is going to drive some players utterly batty, but it's only one example of the fact that *Shadow* is most definitely not a game for everyone. To me, that's a shame, considering the impressively accessible nature of *Ico*. Rather than its predecessor's stark point A to point B simplicity, *Shadow* is comparatively complex, from its more intricate controls to its occasionally unintuitive battles. The need to jump, climb, and stab with fair precision while hanging off huge, moving beasts and keeping an eye on your grip meter—it's much more overwhelming than the demands found in *Ico* are. And though the games have much in common—like the beautiful, impressionistic graphics and the environmental puzzles—*Ico* is, in my estimation, a notably superior experience. I think *Shadow*'s steeper learning curve is going to turn some players off fairly quickly.

And, of course, so may the basic puzzle element of the game, the whole process of figuring out what you'll need to do to beat each beast. As with other puzzle-based adventures, you may find yourself butting your head against a wall, just completely at a loss as to the proper approach to the situation. (I was, on at least two different occasions.) The game tries to mediate this somewhat by offering voiceover hints if you're obviously not making progress against a colossus, but they're spotty; some are far too vague and others are far too obvious. Often, they either completely spoil the experience of figuring things out for yourself or add to the frustration by pointing you in the wrong direction.

So *Shadow* is not for everyone. If you hated *Ico*, you will probably hate *Shadow*—possibly even more. But if you can appreciate artistry in games, if you hanker for an experience that transcends genre, if you want to see what happens when a creative design team is allowed to ignore sales numbers and flavor-of-the-month trends, by all means bring yourself into *Shadow*'s world. I found it a beautiful, thought-provoking, and ultimately rewarding experience, but you may feel differently. Like good art, some will love it and some will hate it. But you can't ignore it. « *Joe Rybicki*

VERDICT It's a work of art: beautiful and moving and potentially alienating.

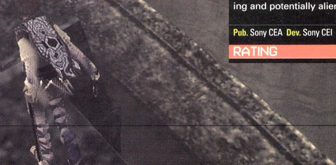
Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Sony CEI **ESRB** RP **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●●◐]

SOOTHE THE SAVAGE BEAST

I would be remiss if I did not mention one of the most beautiful and moving features of *Shadow of the Colossus*: the music. The stirring score was composed by Kou Ohtani, whose only previous videogame credits are 2000's charming, underappreciated PS2 flight sim *Sky Odyssey* and the early PS1 shooter *Philosoma*. Ohtani is no stranger to cinematic scores, however, having worked on several *Gamera* films and a variety of anime series. His flair for the dramatic serves *Shadow* well; the rich, full orchestral and choral arrangements yield spectacular results.

Each colossus battle has at least three distinct themes: A tense, restrained piece plays as you approach the beast and look for your opening. Once you're actually on the colossus, the score shifts to a more stirring battle theme. A third piece punctuates the final moments of the battle, turning to an almost sad, plaintive tone as you bring the colossus down. This context-sensitive score helps make these battles feel like the world-altering events they are.



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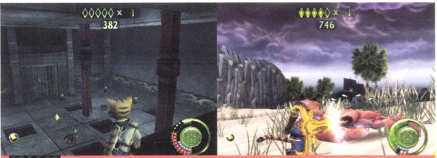


THE LEGEND OF KAY

MERELY O-KAY

Back in the heyday of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, there were a lot of absurd imitators (e.g., *Preteen Dirty Gene Kung Fu Kangaroos*). *Legend of Kay*, with its wisecracking, martial artsing feline hero, feels like a fan of that era decided to make a modern platforming game.

This feeling is reinforced by the story, in which Kay travels to a furry-filled version of China freeing trapped animals, fighting evil animals, and, occasionally, riding other animals. All this occurs in a pretty slick-looking 3D platformer, with plenty of fighting, coin collecting, and jumping.

Mathematically speaking, *LOK* is purely average; its great moments are balanced by horrendous ones. For every time the camera destroys your ability to navigate a jumping puzzle, there's a moment when the pure rhythm of combat becomes fast and enjoyable (helped in part by Kay's ability to jump from foe to foe, à la *Shinobi*). Multiple weapons and combo attacks are neat, but the enemies' tendency to attack while you're stuck in a jumping animation translates into plenty of cheap shots. In between these extremities, *LOK* is content to simply toe the platformer line—fetch quests, racing minigames, silly dialogue, and all.

Legend of Kay ultimately feels like an action-platformer for masochistic, smart-aleck kids. « *Thierry Nguyen*

PLUSH FUR Looks nice, amusing story, neat combat system
COARSE FUR Awful camera, too demanding

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Neon Studios **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●○○]

Legend of Kay developer Neon Studios has exactly one other PlayStation title to its name: 1997's *Tunnel B1*, an unusual first-person shooter/racing game hybrid. The vast majority of the studio's 15 other games are Game Boy releases.

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY

EVERLASTING FUNSTOPPER

You've read this review a hundred times before. You know the setup: A junior varsity game developer teams up with Hollywood to shovel a steaming pile of crap into your PlayStation's disc drive. True, movie license games have earned a better reputation in recent years, but dreck like *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* secures film-to-game adaptations their own circle in hell.

Ignore the screenshots; you've gotta see this game in motion. Charlie's physical connection to his candy-coated world changes by the minute as he floats through platforms and sticks into crevices and corners, sometimes permanently. Charlie's Oompa Loompa helpers don't fare any better, unable to make their way around factory machinery or even Charlie himself.

This is basically a set of repetitive factory-worker tasks peppered with half-baked candy combat. The real challenge, especially for a kid, is figuring out what needs to be operated, powered by an Oompa Loompa, or hit with a Gobstopper. These "puzzle" moments often defy basic logic.

The audience for *Charlie* doesn't read game reviews. They're well-intentioned parents or young kids who dig the movie, buy the game on brand recognition, and take it home to find it broken. Say what you will about Hollywood movies, but at least they have a minimum standard for basic production values. « *Robert Ashley*

VERDICT Allowing your kid to play this game is considered child abuse in 29 states.

Pub. 2K Games **Dev.** High Voltage **ESRB** E **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [◐○○○○]

According to the Internet Movie Database, Christopher Walken was at one point considered for the role of Willy Wonka in 2005's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

GREAT
018
COMBO
GOOD
042
COMBO

PUMP IT UP: EXCEED

EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

By the looks of the middle school notebook illustrations covering *Pump It Up*'s special dancepad, I thought I was in for a low-budget knockoff of *Dance Dance Revolution*. But while the game certainly takes liberally from *DDR*, it feels distinctly different in the way it's played.

Back to the mat, the source of *Pump*'s subtle variation. Where *DDR* places its pressure sensors at north, south, east, and west, the *Pump* pad uses the corners of the mat (northwest, northeast, etc). It also adds a button at the dead center. At first I thought this was a pointless variation, maybe a way to avoid patent infringement. But as I adjusted to the new mat, I noticed that the movements involved are pretty distinct. Many of the patterns involve stepping naturally from one end of the pad to the other. The middle button provides a sort of half step, a connector to the rest of the buttons. I've never felt very graceful playing *DDR*, spinning and stomping my way through the songs. *Pump*, when the patterns aren't too crazy, makes a bit more sense to my uncoordinated limbs.

PERFECT
GOOD
MAX
COMBO

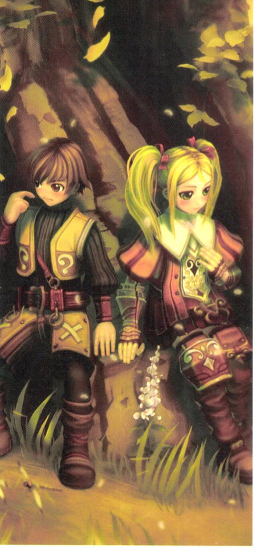
The game also tries to spruce up the usually simple low-fi backgrounds with busy visuals spanning anime-style cartoons, 3D character art, and live video. It's nice for onlookers, but it can be a bit distracting for the player.

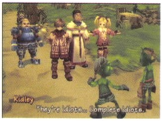
Music is a matter of taste, granted, but dance versions of Mozart and Beethoven? There's a smattering of songs American players may be more familiar with, namely the Junkie XL remix of "A Little Less Conversation" and tracks by the Crystal Method; Earth, Wind, and Fire; and the Sugarhill Gang. It's not the ultimate package, but *Pump It Up* is a viable alternative for the dancing crowd. « *Robert Ashley*

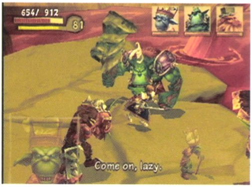
VERDICT More than a knockoff, less than original.

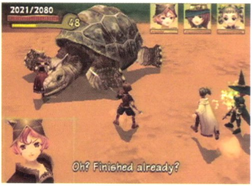
Pub. Mastiff **Dev.** Andamiro **ESRB** T **MSRP** $59.99

RATING [●●●○○]









RADIATA STORIES

SHINY STORY, PALE GAME

Too many role-playing games take themselves very seriously. There seems to be this need for games to be filled with gravitas, to be brimming with pathos and Logos and ethos. So it's refreshing to see an RPG embrace comedy, such as last year's *Shadow Hearts: Covenant* or this new game, *Radiata Stories*.

Sure, the story seems like standard fantasy fare, with knights, elves, dwarves, and orcs all over the place. But then you notice that Jack Russell (the main character—note: not a dog) is a real wiseass and that the NPCs in his party are more of a motley crew than an adventuring fellowship. The dwarves are constantly drinking. The orcs in this world wear sunglasses. *Radiata Stories* wraps its standard fantasy fare with lots of goofy humor, making it a lighter, more amusing adventure overall.

Radiata also tweaks gameplay conventions borrowed from other games. It has a *Suikoden*-esque "recruit over 100 people to fill your party" mechanic, whereby Jack makes friends and then selects up to three of them to fight alongside him. The real-time battle system is similar to *Star Ocean 3*'s; you run around and attack enemies in real time while issuing commands to your party members, but you control only yourself (no hotswapping like in *SO3*). Time passes each day, and people have set schedules (i.e., shops are open in the day, while bars are open at night; some NPCs aren't free until they get off from their day jobs), much like in *Shenmue* or *Dark Cloud 2*. Between plot quests, you are free to perform optional side quests for extra cash and party members. Finally, a major story branch in the middle of the game changes the second half (depending on which side you pick) and thus, of course, the ending.

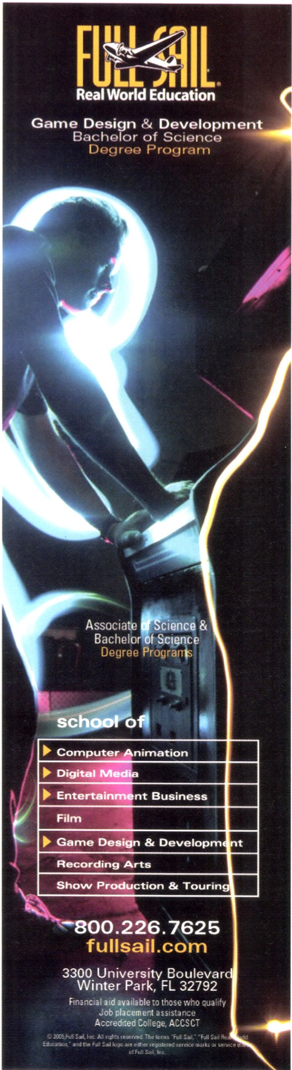
In general, *Radiata* is pretty solid but marred by a few flaws. As mentioned, the combat system is like *SO3*'s, but it's a lot simpler and feels slightly dumbed down. Also, although *SO3* has too much equipment creation and customization, *Radiata* errs on the side of being too limited in its equipment options. It can be disorienting to run around town and try to figure out how to befriend people, especially since you also need to know when to find someone and what to give them. The gameplay seems like an interesting experiment but one that falls a bit short, while the content is what makes *Radiata* stand out.

Then again, I'll take a well-meaning comedy with a few mishaps over standard RPG melodrama. « *Thierry Nguyen*

RADIANT Funny characters, interesting nonlinear gameplay, branching story line
DULL Simplistic combat, can be tiresome to recruit NPCs

Pub. Square Enix **Dev.** Tri-Ace **ESRB** T **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●◐○]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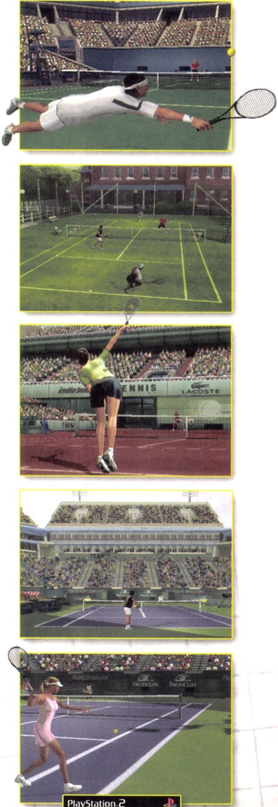

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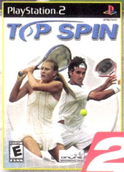

EVERYONE
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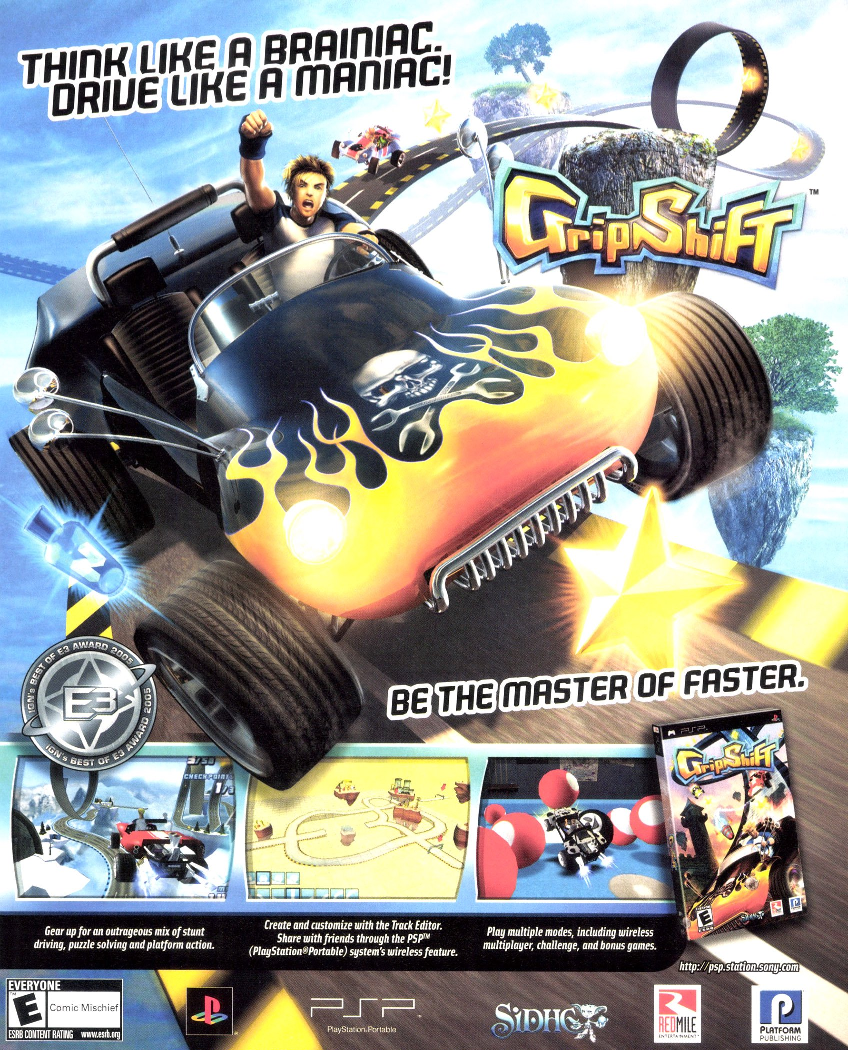

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DUPONT

Pos 10/26
Lap 2/100
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NASCAR 06: TOTAL TEAM CONTROL

GET BY WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM YOUR FRIENDS

With fans constantly whining about the lack of innovation in most sports games, EA's *NASCAR* series must be the exception to the rule, because the game just continues to improve each and every year. This year's newly renamed *Total Team Control* features a tweaked career mode setup, and even better, voice command capability.

NASCAR has become a team sport. Drivers from the same stable depend upon one another to share information, work together in the draft, and generally make life easier for their teammates during each race. Now, with *NASCAR 06*, players can do the same using either an onscreen menu system—which is way too clunky to bother with during competition—or voice commands over the headset, which works just beautifully. Using the headset also allows you to make pit stop decisions and hear your spotter and crew chief during the race.

Otherwise, the setup here is very familiar. Work your way through four NASCAR-sanctioned racing series, each with its own events and racing style, as you try to make a name for yourself. Become a high-priced driver who lives on his reputation or take the plunge and become a multicar team owner (also new this year), financing and hiring drivers with your winnings.

On the track, *NASCAR 06* offers the same intense action we've come to expect from this series. Racing the pack rather than the track is the name of the game, as you furiously jockey for position with 42 other drivers at speeds of up to 200 mph. And now you have to not only decide whether to drive with class and make allies or bounce off your opponents and make enemies, but also consider the ramifications this decision will have on your relationship with your teammates. Knock a guy sideways and into a teammate, and you can bet things won't be pretty at the office on Monday. The whole setup gives the CPU drivers a sort of personality you don't normally find in a driving game.

Unfortunately, however, *NASCAR 06* still suffers from some of the same issues that were plaguing last year's version. A bad framerate tops the list, with almost every race suffering from major stuttering issues at one point or another. Somewhat stupid AI rears its ugly head, too, especially when you're zipping along on road courses with tight corners.

Still, EA's *NASCAR* franchise continues to evolve nicely. Despite the occasional problems, the series captures the claustrophobic feel of pack racing beautifully, and that's no small feat. « *Greg Sewart*

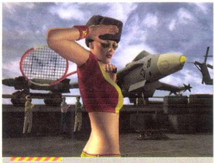
VERDICT Another step forward in the *NASCAR* series; maybe next year's PS3 version will do away with all the framerate issues.

Pub. EA Sports **Dev.** EA Tiburon **ESRB** E **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●●◐]

What do the two games reviewed on this page have in common? A lot: Hypnotix, developer of *Outlaw Tennis*, was recently made part of EA Tiburon, which makes *NASCAR* and *Madden*. The Hypnotix staff will develop games using EA's Arena Football League license.

When the Homestead Miami Speedway was reconfigured to add progressive banking in 2003, drivers actually used that year's *NASCAR* game from EA to practice on the track, as it was the only way they could get experience on the new configuration at the time.



OUTLAW TENNIS

VIRTUALLY THERE

Tennis videogames haven't exactly grown by leaps and bounds since the introduction of *Pong*. Yes, the gameplay has changed slightly with the addition of a variety of serving mechanics, but for the most part, tennis games have remained pretty formulaic.

So in that respect, *Outlaw Tennis* deserves credit for attempting to put a different spin (oh, that is so clever) on the sport by doing away with the traditional game. That doesn't mean you still don't hit a ball back and forth with a racquet—it's still the main part of the game, but now the objectives have changed. Instead of playing a regular three-set match on a normal court, you may have to protect a series of crystal sculptures from ball machines launching destructive ammo. Or you might find yourself in a match of tennis baseball, in which you can earn base hits and runs based on your performance on the court. Some of the other match types found in *Outlaw Tennis* are really creative. If only the gameplay were just a little bit tighter.

Outlaw Tennis tries its best to replicate the feel and flow of genre overlord *Virtua Tennis*, but it doesn't quite make it to that level. There always seems to be a slight disconnect between the controls and the onscreen action, making it difficult to really get your timing down. To make things worse, the ball occasionally just glides right through your racquet.

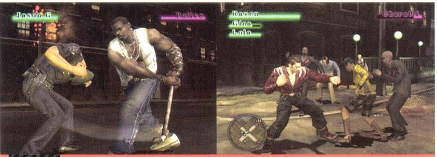
Still, you can have some decent rallies when you get used to the awkwardness, and the online multiplayer is even more entertaining since human opponents have to deal with the same issues you do. Just a little more tweaking would've gone a long way. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

PROS Creative game types, online multiplayer, cheap

CONS Long loading times, controls a little awkward

Pub. Global Star **Dev.** Hypnotix **ESRB** M **MSRP** $19.99

RATING [●●●◐○]



BEAT DOWN: FISTS OF VENGEANCE

SWEAR LIKE A SAILOR SIMULATOR

One of the meetings for the planning of *Beat Down* undoubtedly went something like this:

Mr. Cavia: Hey, we have this idea for a brawler kind of like *Final Fight* but with some 1-on-1 stuff thrown in there.

Mr. Capcom: Hrmm, well, we already have a *Final Fight* game coming.

Mr. Cavia: Oh, did I say *Final Fight*? I meant—it's like *Final Fight* and *GTA* rolled into one! We have excessive cussing and over-the-top violence to mask the fact that the gameplay is totally from 1996.

Mr. Capcom: You, sir, are a genius! They'll never see through that!

Mr. Cavia: No kidding. Plus, we make it seem like it's worthwhile to play through the game because not only are there different characters, but you can also gain experience to level up your character; however, there really is no point to it because the characters all essentially play the same. You're also encouraged to recruit team members, but most of the time, those guys are completely worthless.

Mr. Capcom: Excellent. What about a versus mode?

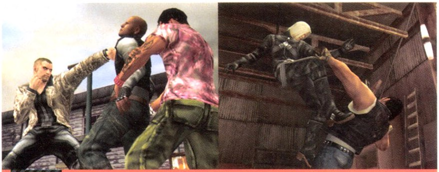
Mr. Cavia: It's in there, but there's no cussing or brutal violence in this mode, so we don't think it will attract as many people.

Mr. Capcom: Good work! Green-light this project right away! « *Giancarlo Varanini*

PROS Repeated use of the word "s***e"
CONS Old brawler mechanics, *GTA* elements don't mix in particularly well

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Cavia **ESRB** M **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●○○○]



URBAN REIGN

COUNTERING CAPCOM

The following is a conversation that didn't actually take place after Namco spies discovered Capcom's plans for world domination with *Beat Down*.

Mr. Namco 1: Did you hear that? We need something to combat Capcom's new beat-em-up initiative, and we need it now.

Mr. Namco 2: Yes, sir. We'll get right on it.

Mr. Namco 1: First, I want you to actually make it fun to play. Put in some mechanics that require some skill. Like a cool counter system—one that lets you essentially counter every single move, giving our game a lot more variety than the typical brawler.

Mr. Namco 2: That sounds complicated.

Mr. Namco 1: Well, we should make it complicated. The counters should require precise timing, so you just can't sit back and press the counter button the whole time.

Mr. Namco 2: I like it. Anything else?

Mr. Namco 1: Yeah, we should make sure the AI forces people to use all of the fighting techniques in their arsenals, like the counters, basic combinations, throws, grappling moves, aerial attacks—all of it.

Mr. Namco 2: OK, but I feel we should put something in there that makes it bad.

Mr. Namco 1: Despite logic telling me otherwise, you're right! Let's mess around with the targeting system a little bit—you know, make it so people end up punching in the opposite direction of an enemy. Capcom won't know what hit them! Ah-ha ah-ha-ha-ha, I am so clever. « *Giancarlo Varanini*

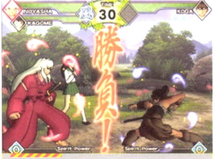
VERDICT Better than *Beat Down.*

Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco **ESRB** RP **MSRP** $49.99

RATING [●●●◐○]

By the end of 2005, the *Inuyasha* TV series will have 37 DVDs released in the United States, bringing the total released episode count up to around 111 out of the series' total of 167. Don't forget the movies, by the way—there are four already.

Not only does *Urban Reign* boast a poor targeting system, it also has a near-senseless story mode, a result of the levels being broken into brief, disjointed segments.



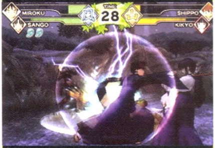
INUYASHA: FEUDAL COMBAT

INUYASHA MAY BE HALF DOG, BUT THIS

A few minutes with *Inuyasha: Feudal Combat*'s insipid story mode destroyed any hope generated by the fact that it was developed by the team behind *Bloody Roar*. Though the game has some unusual and creative gameplay ideas, it's a button masher of the highest degree. It's designed to give anime fans an extraordinary dose of eye candy, and at that it succeeds commendably. As a fighter, even for a casual party game…it's pretty much a wash.

Feudal Combat does pack a visual punch: The developers have gone to great lengths to re-create the look of the anime characters faithfully in 3D, and the backgrounds look hand-painted and are rich with detail. While playing this game, I've attracted onlookers. Not too shabby.

The gameplay has some actual creative touches, too: Your main character teams up with an ally for a two-pronged attack on your foes. There's also a clever rock-paper-scissors elemental damage system of strengths and weaknesses. It sounds exciting, but the former results only in combat confusion, and the latter has little practical impact at all. And though there might be four characters onscreen, the game supports only two players—what gives?



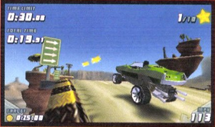
And then there's the core fighting itself. Eighting knows how to make a responsive fighting engine, and *Feudal Combat* is definitely sensitive—but it's so oversimplified there's just no strategic depth. Each character has only a handful of special moves. Worse, a devastating supermove is available right on the Circle button. Meanwhile, I can't imagine the nothing-happens story mode doing much, even for hardcore fans.

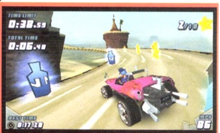
What becomes obvious is that *Feudal Combat* was dumbed way down in an attempt to make it accessible to casual fans of the TV series. « *Christian Nutt*

VERDICT Nice touches like graphics and gameplay elements ultimately don't disguise this fighter's lack of depth.

Pub. Bandai **Dev.** Eighting **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●○○○]





GRIPSHIFT

SOUNDS DIRTY, BUT IT'S NOT

This charming, odd little game bills itself as "puzzle platform driving action," which sounds ridiculous. But if you reexamine the moniker after playing the game, it starts to make sense. Think of *GripShift* as an ultrasimple platforming game in which the challenge is figuring out how to get from the beginning of a level to the end without falling. Now replace the formulaic mascot you're picturing with a car. Yes, a car.

GripShift has more than a little in common with *Super Monkey Ball* in that the object of the game is to use a less-than-perfect control scheme to navigate a short (but treacherous) course, collect items, and make it to the end before time runs out or you lose your concentration and go flying off the edge. Now, the idea of doing this with a car may sound like an exercise in exquisite agony, but the game compensates by stubbornly refusing to acknowledge most of the laws of physics. Want to brake to a complete stop in midair? No problem!

The result is a very, very simple game: Get from point A to point B, grab stars along the way, and move on to the next level. You'll unlock cars, bonus games (like car soccer), and tracks at a ridiculous rate. It all turns out to be surprisingly addictive; there are enough unlockables that it's easy to slip into the "just one more track" mentality. And the astonishingly robust track editor adds even more value.

In terms of addictive qualities, it's certainly no *Lumines*. But it is a surprisingly solid game. « *Joe Rybicki*

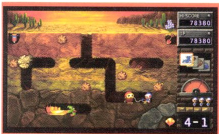
PROS Addictively simple, amazing track editor
CONS Perhaps too simple to have much longevity, controls are a bit imprecise

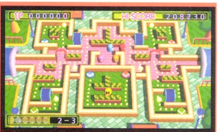
Pub. Platform Pub. **Dev.** Red Mile/Sidhe **ESRB** E **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●◐○]

ONE TO WATCH

Sidhe, developer of *GripShift*, is a New Zealand–based studio with exactly one released title to its name: the U.K.-only *Rugby League*. Coming up this year are the highly anticipated *Rugby League 2* and *Frankie Dettori Racing*. Er, yeah—more games for Yanks, please!





NAMCO MUSEUM BATTLE COLLECTION

PAC-MAN STRIKES AGAIN

Philosophical questions have provoked debate for ages. If a tree falls in the forest and no one hears it, does it make a sound? Which came first, the chicken or the egg? I've come up with my own puzzler: If there is no *Pac-Man* software available for a gaming machine, is it a legitimate platform?

Namco apparently doesn't think so, which might explain why Pac-Man's umpteenth appearance is on the PSP. This latest version brings together 17 classic arcade titles into one big happy family, combining more popular games (*Pac-Man, Ms. Pac-Man, Dig Dug, Galaga, Rally X*) with lesser-known ones (*Mappy, Bosconian, Grobda*).

In addition to the originals, *Galaga, New Rally X, Pac-Man*, and *Dig Dug* also come in updated versions. Work your way through the updated 3D worlds, which include different power-ups and boss battles at the end of each stage. The new versions also offer head-to-head matches via Wi-Fi for two to four players, and the updated *Pac-Man* includes a co-op mode.

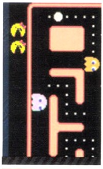
My main complaint is that, thanks to a vastly shrunken screen, a level of precision is required that the analog nub and D-pad just can't always provide. I died more than once vainly jabbing a directional button.

This title isn't original and it isn't innovative, but the games work really well for the PSP—I'd argue that they're more appropriate here than they are on PS2. Plus, it helps flesh out the PSP's current anemic software lineup. « *Dana Jongewaard*

VERDICT A good dose of classic fun that translates well to portability.

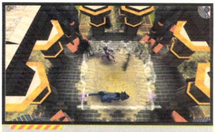
Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco **ESRB** E **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●◐○]



GIVE A GIFT

If your friend is curious about the collection, you can beam him a demo that includes the single-player versions of 10 games: *Pac-Man, Ms. Pac-Man, Galaxian, Galaga, Rally-X, New Rally-X, Dig Dug, Bosconian, King & Balloon*, and *Xevious*.

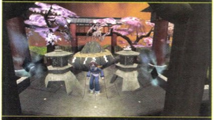


FRANTIX

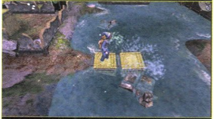
MORE PAINSTAKING THAN FRANTIC

More than any other genre, puzzle games can suck me in for hours. Since playing a round can take so little time, it's easy to promise myself "just once more"; 60 promises later, I find I just blew half a day.

The technical requirements of puzzle games are typically quite low as well, which means that they load quickly and easily. Those quick chunks of gameplay translate ideally to a portable format, allowing people to still get a good game experience whether they have two minutes or an hour.



Frantix gives you all that. The puzzles (which are of the item-collecting-and-obstacle-navigating variety) take at most a few minutes each, they load quickly, and there's no reloading between additional attempts. However, most puzzles don't require solving so much as navigating; it would have been nice to have to exert a little more mental effort.



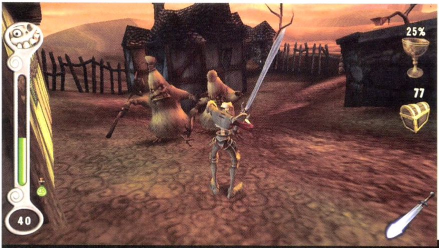
The levels themselves can occasionally be a pain in the butt to navigate because you can't always zoom out far enough to get an idea of where you should be going. Combine that with a control scheme that's awkward at times, and the result is a lot of annoying little goofs that require you to start the puzzle over.

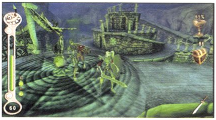
But, ultimately none of these things hangs up the game too much. While the addictive quality that the best games of this genre have is missing, *Frantix* isn't a bad way to waste time. « *Dana Jongewaard*

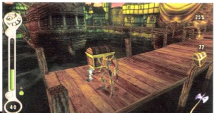
PROS Fast loads, quick rounds, light mental exertion
CONS Tough to see the level at times, light mental exertion

Pub. Platform Pub. **Dev.** Killer Game **ESRB** E **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●○○]







MEDIEVIL RESURRECTION

MAY RESURRECT YOUR PLAYING ON THE PSP

MediEvil Resurrection is a delight; it's the kind of pick-up-and-play puzzle-solving adventure that's perfect for the PSP. The premise is goofy and the humor even goofier—but the solid controls, fun pacing, at-times inventive puzzles, and rousing soundtrack make for an ultimately satisfying time.

Resurrection is a sort-of sequel to 1998's *MediEvil* and 2000's *MediEvil II* for the PlayStation. You follow the misadventures of Sir Daniel Fortesque, the mumbling, skeletal hero of Gallowmere, who has been recruited to stop the evil wizard Zarok from carrying out his plans to take over the world by resurrecting the dead. OK, not the most original premise, but it works.

Resurrection's gameplay perspective is third person, and the levels follow the familiar "work your way up to the boss" model. While traveling through a surprising variety of worlds, you'll encounter an equally surprising variety of game styles: You'll fight through some levels, but in others you'll collect items and solve puzzles; some levels combine both styles. This mixed approach usually keeps the pace fresh—but not always. For instance, after you spend several hours solving puzzles, the Asylum level's singular emphasis on taking out waves of enemies is a little jarring.

Each time Sir Dan finishes a level, he makes a stop at the Hall of Heroes to meet a new once-great warrior who gives him advice and a special weapon. I thought that each special weapon would correspond to a specific need in the forthcoming level, but that wasn't the case. Certain weapons did come in handy, like the war hammer and the longbow, but I found the long sword to be consistently effective throughout.

Resurrection is a long game, and—shoot me for saying this—it might be too long. In about the final third of the game, I found myself repeating entire levels because I didn't have something I needed—not so bad since I was familiar with those areas, but the game didn't appear to remember I had already been there, so I had to replay the level, enemies and all. Fortunately, the PSP—God bless its soul—has the "save anytime, anyplace" feature. The convenience is just so...convenient.

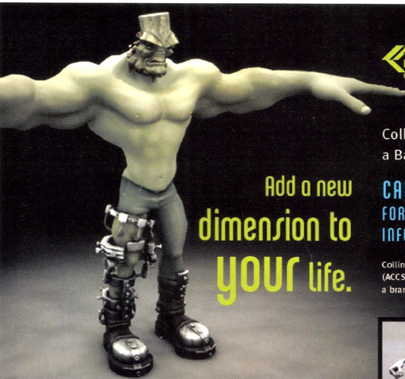
Aside from the level repeats, complaints are minor: An odd bug prevented me from selecting a shield, and the camera can be a little disorienting at times. I'm not a big fan of the humor ("Scarecrow Fields: Prepare to be scared...if you're a crow"—I mean, c'mon!), though it keeps the game lighthearted and suggests the developers were just having fun.

Just having fun? It shows. « *Tom Byron*

VERDICT A quirky, lighthearted third-person action-adventure that's a fun and engaging diversion—ideal for the PSP.

Pub. SCEA **Dev.** Sony Cambridge **ESRB** T **MSRP** $39.99

RATING [●●●●○]



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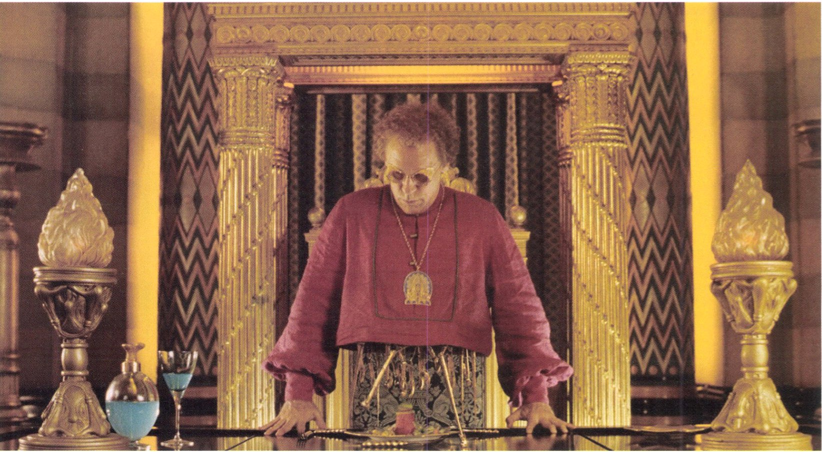
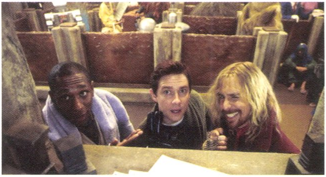
by Rick O'Connor

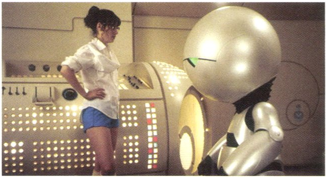


THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

(Martin Freeman, Mos Def)

IMPROBABLY AMUSING by John Scalzi





The book this film is based on, by the late, lamented Douglas Adams, very nearly made me vomit with laughter when I was 12; I distinctly remember the mother of a friend pulling her car over to the side of the road in order to avoid having her backseat coated in gastric juices (I managed not to hurl). A couple dozen years later, a film adaptation of the book popped into existence, as if sprung from the very bowels of the improbability drive itself. And from me, this film inspires a warm affection and the occasional happy chuckle. But no danger of vomiting.

Why? Well, for one thing, I'm no longer 12 (I have a mortgage to prove that, as well as the male-pattern baldness), and *Hitchhiker's* humor is best read when one is young. For another thing, *Hitchhiker's* brand of comedy is best suited for reading. Yes, I know it was also a radio show, and a TV show. I've heard/seen/read them all. I say the word-based version works best because so much of the humor depends on a dry British pacing that doesn't transfer perfectly to other media. It doesn't help that this film version has been somewhat Americanized, with Mos Def as Ford Prefect and Sam Rockwell off the rails as Zaphod. It's not entirely coincidental that the most effective parts are the ones in which the narrator (a delightful Stephen Fry) reads entire passages from the book with a crisp zeal.

Still, it's very hard to make humor and science fiction go together in film at all, and given Hollywood's track record of slaughtering beloved science fiction books, there were so many ways this could have gone horribly wrong. While this film doesn't match up to my experience with the book, it's still rather amusing and fun. Martin Freeman is perfectly cast as the hapless Arthur Dent, the last human man, and bits and pieces come through as inspired (the opening sequence with the singing dolphins is an instant classic). Verdict: mostly harmless, and I mean that in a good way.

RATING

THE ADVENTURES OF SHARKBOY & LAVAGIRL IN 3-D

(Cayden Boyd, George Lopez)

This is, arguably, the best kids' film cowritten by a 7-year-old (that would be Racer Rodriguez, son of director/producer/co-writer/coscorer/cinematographer/editor Robert Rodriguez), but, if you'll recall your own 7-year-old self, you'll remember that story was not your strong suit. If you're 7, you'll be entertained by the silly action and 3D. If you're a grown-up, however, go check out the elder Rodriguez's other movie this year, *Sin City*. You'll be happier.

RATING [○○○●●]

LOST: THE COMPLETE FIRST SEASON

(Matthew Fox, Evangeline Lilly)

People of all types seem to be united in their passion for geeking out over *Lost*. The obvious reasons: The show (which, if you don't know, concerns the lives of plane wreck survivors on a mysterious island) is really well written; it's smart; it's tense; it's got characters you can care about and/or hate; and it's got an edge of freaky, just-this-edge-of-hysteria weirdness that keeps you coming back for more. The nonobvious reason: When we get on a plane, don't we all look around and wonder, if the plane did go down, who would try to take charge of the survivors? Who would go insane? Who would we, you know, *eat* if we had to? Oh, stop looking at me like that; you do it too. *Lost* is like that little panicky scenario in your fevered head, done up dramatically. That's why people really watch the show.

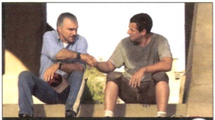
RATING [●●●●●]

CRASH

(Don Cheadle, Sandra Bullock)

So, want to know who among us harbors racist feelings? According to *Crash*, we all do, which the film illustrates by putting people of all races, colors, and creeds right up to next each other and then watching as they totally blow up, thanks to their preconceived notions of each other based on prejudice. Fortunately, writer/director Paul Haggis (hot off writing *Million Dollar Baby*) jams out an excellent story and is backed up by an equally excellent ensemble cast.

RATING [○○○○◐]



THE LONGEST YARD

(Adam Sandler, Chris Rock)

While it's hard to see Adam Sandler as a former NFL quarterback turned jailbird, I have nothing bad to say about this film, which is highly unusual for me regarding an Adam Sandler "comedy." But this one's got a solid backing cast (including Burt Reynolds, who had Sandler's role in the 1974 original), it's got decent humor of its type, and the gridiron action is fine. It's designed to get a laugh and then go away. It does its job. Can't fault it for that.

RATING [○○○●●]

DVD RELEASES

September 6
Crash
Lost: Season 1
September 13
Fever Pitch
The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy
September 20
The Longest Yard
Mindhunters
Sharkboy and Lavagirl
September 27
Family Guy Presents Stewie Griffin: The Untold Story
Lords of Dogtown
Robots

MINDHUNTERS

(Christian Slater, Val Kilmer)

Another one of those films in which a mysterious murderer goes about offing people in a manner appropriate to their idioms, which is a good reason not to develop distinguishing personality tics. If this mediocre suspense film with its cast of faded stars had been released in 1995, it might have been one of the big films of the year. But it's 2005 and apparently no one gives a crap, including possibly the stars and director. Time really is the destroyer.

RATING [○○◐●●]

FEVER PITCH

(Jimmy Fallon, Drew Barrymore)

A serious young woman falls in love with a man only to find out he's a damn fool for the Red Sox. Welcome to Boston, girl. This movie didn't do very well, which is a little sad because it's actually rather sweet, with "date film" written all over it. I suppose sports widows see enough obsession during the season and don't really want it in their romantic comedies, and the jocks were wondering why Barrymore was blocking all the sports scenes.

RATING [○○○◐●]

LORDS OF DOGTOWN

(Emile Hirsch, Heath Ledger)

This is an adequate film, but I don't know why it exists—the story here, about pioneering skateboarders in the '70s, was more than adequately covered by the superior documentary *Dogtown and Z-Boys*, directed by former skater Stacy Peralta (who wrote this film). Given the existence of that film, this one appears to exist only to give a bunch of young actors an excuse to do their best Spicoli imitations. Check out the documentary instead.

RATING [○○○●●]

UMD RELEASES

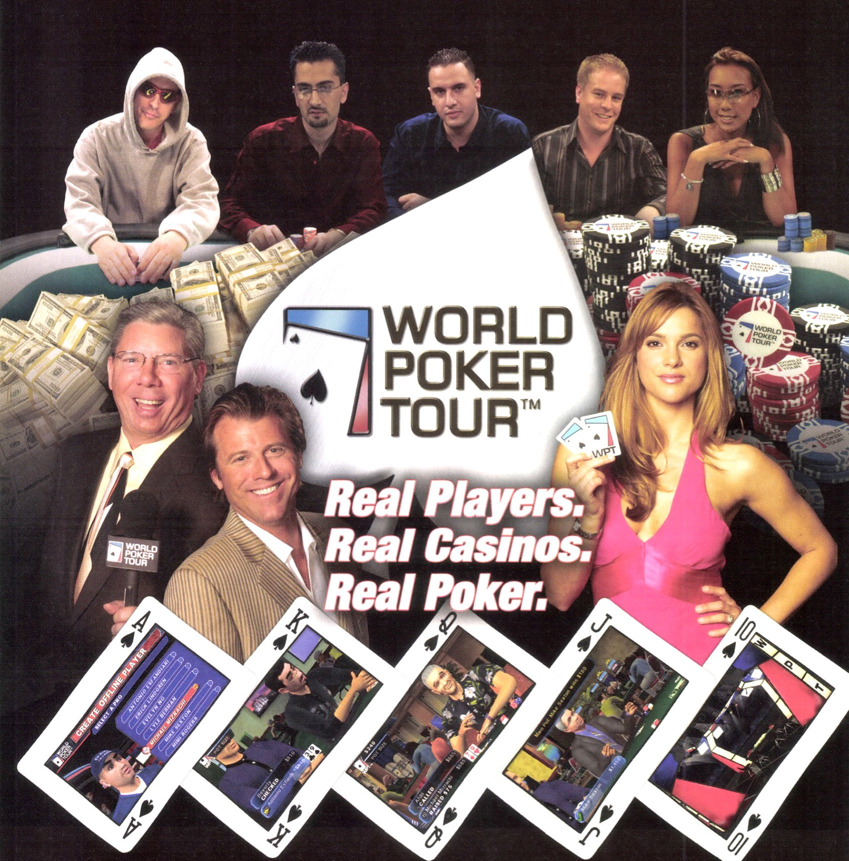
September 6
Crash
The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy
Lost: The Pilot
September 13
Be Cool
Bulletproof Monk
Pulp Fiction
September 27
Family Guy Presents Stewie Griffin: The Untold Story
Robots

ROBOTS

(Ewan McGregor, Halle Berry)

William Joyce, creator of *Rolie Polie Olie*, is the principal mastermind behind this film, in which clanky robots fight to keep from being modernized by a corporate robo-shark. Like many conceptually gorgeous films, this one's better if you ignore the story and the infantile bits therein and concentrate on some of the set pieces. The Rube Goldberg–like trip across the city is worth the price of the DVD alone for its sheer mad whizziness.

RATING [○○○◐●]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Beverly
CHECKED
Antonio Esfandi
$240
POT SIZE
$665
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Michael Mizrachi
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SONY
MEMORY CARD 2
MEMORY CARD 1

REPLAY

114>

5 YEARS

A LOOK BACK AT THE HISTORY OF THE PS2

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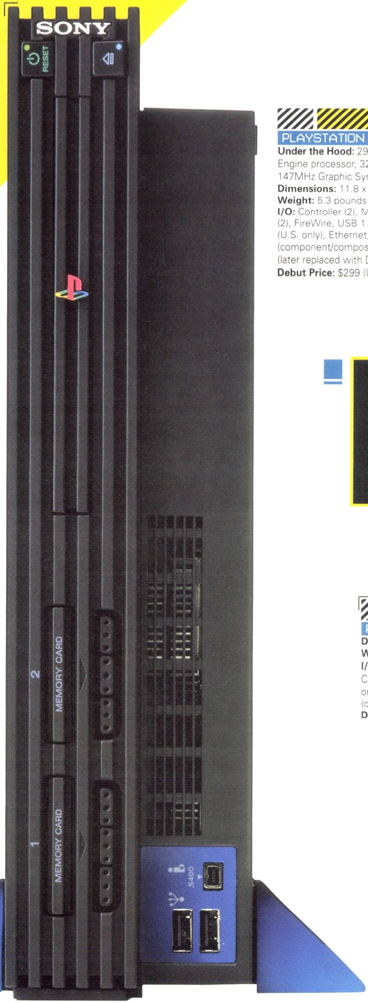

PLAYSTATION 2

Under the Hood: 294MHz or 299MHz Emotion Engine processor, 32MB Rambus DRAM, 147MHz Graphic Synthesizer, DVD-ROM drive
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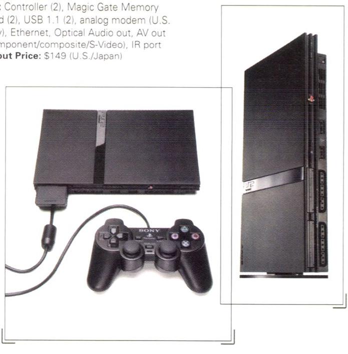
Weight: 5.3 pounds
I/O: Controller (2), Magic Gate Memory Card (2), FireWire, USB 1.1 (2), analog modem (U.S. only), Ethernet, Optical Audio out, AV out (component/composite/S-Video), PCMCIA slot (later replaced with DEV9)
Debut Price: $299 (U.S.), $379 (Japan)

PS2:

PS2 SLIMLINE

Dimensions: 9.0 x 6.0 x 1.1 inches
Weight: 2.0 pounds
I/O: Controller (2), Magic Gate Memory Card (2), USB 1.1 (2), analog modem (U.S. only), Ethernet, Optical Audio out, AV out (component/composite/S-Video), IR port
Debut Price: $149 (U.S./Japan)



FIVE YEARS LATER

THE LITTLE EMOTION ENGINE THAT COULD MOTORS INTO ITS SECOND HALF-DECADE

Even as Sony was changing history back in 1995 with the launch of the original PlayStation (see our article in *OPM* #96), its think tank was looking ahead to the future. While gamers were being dazzled by *Toshinden* and *Ridge Racer*, sources close to the company said that players hadn't seen anything yet. Sony, they predicted, was already planning a follow-up console, due as soon as 1999.

As it turned out, the rumors were spot on. On March 2, 1999, Sony unveiled the most unsurprising secret in gaming: The PlayStation 2 was coming. And 19 months later, it arrived in the United States amidst a frenzy of media hype and consumer enthusiasm unrivaled by any system before—or after. The PS2's debut was met with shortages, rumors, and downright frothing demand.

It's been five long years since the U.S. launch. Half a decade ago we lined up in the dead of night, bleary eyed but giddy to be the first to leap into the next generation of gaming. Since then, new rivals to Sony's dominance have arrived, while others have bowed out; the industry landscape has changed considerably in five years.

But one thing remains the same: The PlayStation 2 is still at the top of the heap. The Xbox may push more polygons, and the GameCube might have the most popular first-party franchises, but the PS2 still packs a potent wallop at retail (its recent Slim-Fast makeover didn't hurt). And its software library is still the biggest of any viable system on the market, putting even the venerable Game Boy family to shame—there are more than 2,000 different titles worldwide. And that's not counting the 3,000 or so PS1 games it's backward compatible with.

As Sony's sleek colossus enters its sixth year of life in America and the company reorients the focus of its mammoth hype machine from PSP to PS3, we'd like to take a moment to toast the PS2. For its success. For its substance. And most of all, for its totally sweet software library.

BIRTH OF THE PS2

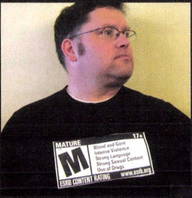
It was a given that the PS2 was going to be a hit; after all, it was following in the footsteps of the PlayStation, which had become a catchall household name for gaming whose ubiquity rivaled Nintendo's. Still, the public's reaction to its unveiling was a mixed bag: Many people were awestruck by the PlayStation's graphical capabilities, but this feeling was tinged with uncertainty about the system's unusual case design.

Crafted by Teiyu Goto, whose Vaio computer line had placed Sony's PCs at the forefront of industrial design alongside Apple's fruit-colored iMac line, the PS2 case was a far cry from the slim, gray PS1. Both heavier and larger than its contemporaries (though

THE PLAYSTATION 2 IS STILL AT THE TOP OF THE HEAP.

GTA—OH NO!

AKA MRS. COHEN'S MEAL TICKET



A West Virginia convenience store clerk wins $2,699,000 in punitive damages after she injures her back opening a pickle jar. A California man sues two Las Vegas casinos for letting him gamble away $1 million while he was drunk. Florence Cohen sues Rockstar, claiming she bought *GTA: San Andreas* for her 14-year-old grandson "without knowing it contained hidden, sexually explicit scenes" (see Hype, page 20).

In our sue-for-anything culture, it's still shocking to see what makes it to the courts. True, Mrs. Cohen may just be trying to cash in on the Hot Coffee controversy. But it still begs the question: What part of "Blood and Gore, Intense Violence, Strong Language, Strong Sexual Content, and Use of Drugs" did she not understand when she bought the game? It's clearly there, right next to the "MATURE 17+" and images of gangstas with guns.

The ESRB rating system is there in part as an aid for people like Mrs. Cohen to make informed decisions about game purchases. In her case, let's hope logic and self-accountability figure in somewhere. « *Tom Byron*

THE OPM FAMILY

MISSION STATEMENT

Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine is America's No. 1 authority on all things PlayStation. *OPM*'s expert editors and writers are the best in the business, presenting the most important PlayStation news, previews, and reviews in a professional, enthusiastic, and honest manner, and our in-depth features and interviews are second to none. While *OPM* editorial is completely independent of Sony, the magazine's "official" status allows it to include the exclusive monthly DVD packed with playable demos and videos of the hottest PlayStation games around. *OPM* provides its readers with a fun, informative—and beautifully designed—package each and every month, because, after all, fun is what PlayStation gaming is all about.

DANA JONGEWAARD

is getting ready for the fall onslaught of games by putting her cat through a vigorous training regimen. First step: teaching him to deliver the entertainment center remotes to her side. Next up: getting him to walk to 7-Eleven and fetch snacks.

JOE RYBICKI

spent so much time riding a horse while playing *Shadow of the Colossus* that he decided it was his dream to become a jockey...from the 1920s. Through the magic of time travel we bring you proof of this historic event, which hasn't happened yet.

THIERRY NGUYEN

is now adventuring in the strange, wonderful, unexplored world of Cabo San Lucas. He plans on using all the tricks he's learned from playing *Metal Gears 1, 2,* and *3* to learn the dirty secrets of this quaint little village.

GIANCARLO VARANINI

didn't win the Ziff Davis *Soul Calibur II* tournament, but he takes comfort in knowing that he lost to the man who won it all (*EGM*'s Demian Linn) and the fact that he can make a pretty good egg sandwich, or eggwich, if you will.

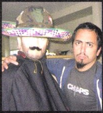
LOGAN PARR

is getting ready for the hundreds and hundreds of games coming out this fall. He isn't sure when he will find the time to play them all, so he'll be forced to choose like the rest of us. Find out his favorite picks through his stream of consciousness at logans_run.1UP.com.

Ameow
Belkor

RYAN VULK

wants to give a shout-out to all the peeps who have said kind words about *OPM* in the Ramuh realm of *FFXI*. And big congrats are in order for his partner in crime Ameow, for finally handing Maat's ass to him in Genkai 5. /praise ^6



ALEJANDRO CHAVETTA

is in the process of growing a moustache that looks just like that of his new roommate, whose name is Señor Snake. According to Señor Snake, this new look will help Alejandro get in touch with his masculine side...or not.

ZOE FLOWER

will not be satisfied until she has achieved her lifelong goal of opening all of humanity's eyes to the wondrous form of entertainment that is gaming. This is why she has offered DNA to labs for cloning, so she has a little assistance in the herculean task.

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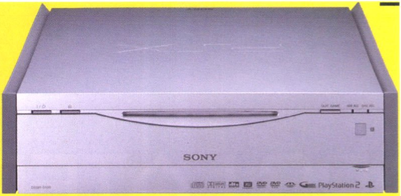
LITTLE BLACK SHEEP

When Sony, spurned by partner Nintendo, first set out to create its own 32-bit console, it resurrected the name of its joint Super NES Play Station add-on project: PlayStation-X. The code name caught on, and gamers continued to refer to the system as PSX long after the X was dropped from the name.

But there actually is a real PSX, which was released long after the PlayStation had been rechristened PS1. Best described as a combination PS2 and TiVo, the PSX features a massive hard drive (either 160GB or 250GB), is capable of recording TV shows and burning them to CD or DVD-R, and is believed to have link-up capabilities with the upcoming PlayStation 3.

Never heard of this beast of a machine? Well, the fact that the PSX was released only in Japan could have something to do with that. Oh, and it cost almost a thousand bucks, putting it well out of the average gamer's price range.

Ambitious and sleek, the PSX was Sony's first serious attempt to follow up on its early ambitions of making the PS2 the center of a home digital-entertainment hub. And it was a resounding flop. Maybe Sony will get it right with the PS3...but hopefully, it'll remember that it's about the games first and foremost.



PSX, RELEASED 2004

THE NUMBERS

- **Dimensions:** 12.3 x 3.5 x 12.7 inches
- **Weight:** 12.79 pounds
- **Price:** $731 (160GB), $899 (250GB)

it would soon be eclipsed by Microsoft's monolithic Xbox), the PS2 was a sharp, angular piece of machinery designed to look more like a cross between a computer and a high-end home electronic appliance—fitting, given its PC-level 3D processing power and DVD playback capabilities. With its cool blue LED (back when they were a novelty and not a nuisance) and motorized drive door, the machine looked and felt powerful.

The PS2 also sported the ability to stand upright like a PC minitower, a feature previously seen only in the most obscure home consoles (most notably the Japan-only NEC PC-FX). Sony pointed to this as a space-saving feature that would give the bulky console a smaller footprint than even the tiny Dreamcast, although some users snickered that it was a necessary response to the fact that many PS1s could only be used sideways due to drive motors that wore out as a result of extended use. Sensible design or mere fakery? Whatever the case, Sony was clearly on to something—the next-gen offerings from both Nintendo and Microsoft will offer the same feature.

Sony had big plans for the system from the start. The company's CEO, Howard Stringer, described the PS2's role in the company's future as the Trojan horse that would inspire customers to create massive, networked home-entertainment centers (ideally consisting of Sony components, no doubt) with the game console as the hub. There was also talk of a PS2-centric "massive broadband network" that would be put in place "sometime in 2001," with content that would include on-demand downloadable movies created by such luminaries as George Lucas. Needless to say, neither of these quite panned out as expected—although Sony did make the attempt.

THE HARDWARE

Sony promised a lot with the PS2, and on most levels the system delivered. Inside the bold, black PS2 case was a custom-built 128-bit processor that Sony rather boldly called the Emotion Engine. Running at 294MHz and change, the EE was supplemented by a 150MHz graphics processor that was reportedly capable of displaying 75 million polygons per second (or about 13 million polys per second under "real" conditions). In addition to all that, it also played movies in the increasingly popular DVD format, giving it a distinct advantage over the GD-ROM-based Dreamcast.

THE IMPRESSIVE POWER DIDN'T COME WITHOUT CORNER CUTTING.

The system's impressive power didn't come without a little corner cutting in other areas, though. Despite the growing importance of networked gaming, the PS2 was, strangely, lacking a modem—unlike the Dreamcast, which came standard with a 56K modem that could be swapped out for a broadband adapter. Sony's official explanation was that being the best in dial-up was, in the memo-

HIT AND MISS

The PS2 seemed like a pretty sure thing even before its launch, it's true, but that doesn't mean it didn't have a few surprises in store—especially when it came to games.

MISS: DARK CLOUD

Level-5's 'georama' RPG isn't a bad game by any means, but unrealistic expectations among fervent PlayStation fans hoping for a *Zelda* killer were utterly dashed by *Dark Cloud*'s slow, complex gameplay and unremarkable graphics. Sadly, its much refined (and completely gorgeous) sequel went almost unnoticed.

MISS: THE BOUNCER

Square's PS1 games ran the gamut from shooters (*Einhander*) to RPGs (*Final Fantasy*), but they have a few things in common: refined gameplay and beautiful graphics. *The Bouncer* looks amazing, but the cool features seen in early demos (like the incredible interactive environments) somehow failed to make it into the final game, leaving this highly anticipated adventure just another mindless beat-em-up.

HIT: GRAND THEFT AUTO III

The PS1 played host to the first few *GTA*s, which caused a small stir with their edgy content but were otherwise little more than sleeper hits. When DMA Design (now Rockstar North) moved the series into 3D, though, it created a genuine sensation that quickly spread from the media to gamers, catapulting a once-obscure series to the forefront of the industry.

MISS: METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SONS OF LIBERTY

The system's killer app from the moment of its E3 debut, *MGS2* was so hot that it caused people to buy *Zone of the Enders* just to get their hands on the included demo. The game plays well and looks incredible. But director Hideo Kojima perhaps got a little too clever, relegating main man Solid Snake to a supporting role and bogging the endgame down with cryptic social commentary and confusing double-crosses, alienating fans.

HIT: SOCOM: U.S. NAVY SEALS

GoldenEye 007 and *Halo* proved that consoles weren't such a bad place for shooters after all. But *SOCOM* did them one better by adding online squad-based gameplay to the genre's mix, at once becoming one of the PS2's premiere franchises and single-handedly selling more broadband adapters than any title released before or after.

MISS: TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS

Lara Croft helped make the PS1 a best-selling console, so expectations were high for her next-generation debut. But overly ambitious design and an accelerated release schedule clipped this angel's wings, leaving Eidos and Crystal Dynamics with the difficult task of restoring the franchise's dignity with next year's *Tomb Raider: Legend*.

HIT: BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN

Under Acclaim's control, the *Burnout* series never really netted much, well, acclaim. But when Criterion's smash-em-up racing series was passed over to Electronic Arts, everyone suddenly took notice of its fast, frenzied action—it's a racing game that even people who hate racing could love. With its addictively dumb action and incredible visuals, *Burnout 3* makes *Gran Turismo 4* look like a pokey dinosaur in comparison.

HIT: KATAMARI DAMACY

The graphics are blocky and simple, the cover sports cows and rainbows, and the name is confusing—even for the Japanese gamers that it was originally designed for. Yet Namco's quirky budget title somehow gained a loyal following, and a shockingly faithful English adaptation retained its charmingly appealing gameplay while perfectly capturing its whimsical spirit.

rable words of VP of Research and Development Phil Harrison, "like racing to be the world's tallest midget," and anyone who was serious about online gaming would wait for the broadband adapter.

Harder to explain away was the system's lack of support for four players. While the Nintendo 64 and Dreamcast had four controller ports, the PS2 offered just two, with a Multitap costing an extra $35. Meanwhile, the machine sported a few superfluous connectivity options—something of a tradition with Sony hardware, it seems. The original PS1 lost its RCA connections and serial port in later revisions; likewise, the PS2's FireWire (IEEE 1394) port seems to have vanished without a trace. Originally, Sony suggested that digital cameras could be attached via FireWire to place players' images in games, but the USB-based EyeToy has capably handled this feature. The original PS2 hardware also included a PCMCIA connection for the network adapter or hard drive peripheral. Since the slim-line PS2 has broadband built in and doesn't support the HDD, this too has been abandoned.

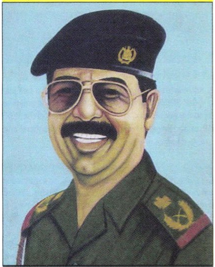
While these small shortcomings have long been a sticking point among the ultrahardcore set, they've done little to diminish the PS2's success. On the other hand, Sony's designers made a few truly brilliant hardware design decisions. For instance, they handily predicted the upcoming HD era by including support for high-definition output, although a small minority of games actually makes use of the feature.

Far more impressively, the PS2 featured near-total backward compatibility with the original PlayStation—not an unprecedented feature but certainly an idea that had never been used to such great effect. By using a compacted version of the PS1's processor as the system's I/O controller, Sony guaranteed that the PS2 had an instant catalog of thousands of games at launch. Only a tiny handful of minor PS1 titles refused to run on the PS2; meanwhile, supported games could be run with accelerated disc access and texture smoothing. These extra features weren't quite perfect but went a long way toward giving the console a sense of value. PS1 memory cards worked in the system as well, although they could only be used for older games; after all, PS2 cards had 64 times the capacity of the previous generation's cards and were significantly faster.

IN JUST 48 HOURS, NEARLY 1 MILLION PS2s WERE SOLD.

ROCK ON OVER TOKYO

Gamers were given a chance to see the machine in action for themselves almost exactly a year after its unveiling. Tens of thousands of Japanese gamers lined up across the country the evening of March 3, 2000, hoping for a chance to get their hands on the system. In just 48 hours, nearly 1 million PS2s were sold to giddy consumers, making it 10 times as successful as its predecessor. Its initial price



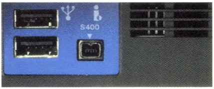
CONSOLES OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Even Saddam Hussein got in on PlayStation 2 mania—or so the rumor went. According to Worldnetdaily.com, the then-dictator of Iraq sent out secret agents to acquire upward of 4,000 PS2s in order to cobble together high-powered missile-control systems. This particular report has since been debunked, disproven, and otherwise declared a load of hogwash, but at the time, quite a few gamers were willing to swallow it whole, if only because it made for a much more entertaining explanation for the rampant system shortages than "Sony couldn't make them fast enough."

PS2 ORPHANAGE

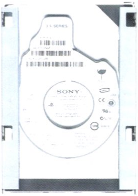
FIREWIRE PORT

This high-speed connection protocol (also known as IEEE 1394) was touted by Apple as the next big thing thanks to its high bandwidth, which absolutely smoked USB 1.1. But then USB 2.0 came along and, whoops, suddenly FireWire was no longer the fastest form of connectivity on the block. So Sony was probably left scratching its collective head and wondering why the PS2 featured a FireWire port in the first place, since no one ever actually used it. Unsurprisingly, this port was dropped in later revisions, and no one seemed to mind.



NETWORK ADAPTOR

The Network Adaptor hasn't been abandoned so much as obviated: The slimline system features both modem and Ethernet ports on the backside to allow network connections. Owners of older systems still need the add-on, but that sleek new PS2 model is so compact and lightweight that it's often tempting to just abandon that clunky old model altogether....



HDD

Very few games ever supported the Hard Disk Drive expansion—mainly online titles and Square RPGs, which copied game data to the disk for faster access than the DVD-ROM drive could provide. Nevertheless, the lack of HDD support in the new slimline PS2 was definitely a blow to *Final Fantasy XI* enthusiasts; without the hard drive, there's no way for them to enjoy their online drug of choice but to migrate to (*gasp*) PC. Sony's poor treatment of the PlayOnline community is likely the reason behind *FFXI*'s expansion to Xbox 360.

was ¥39,800, roughly $360—slightly expensive, but actually a little cheaper than the price the original PlayStation launched at.

Many who were fortunate enough to snag systems at launch turned around and sold them on eBay to eager Americans who inexplicably paid as much as $1,200 for the chance to play the first batch of PS2 games. It's hard to imagine why anyone would have been willing to shell out that much, given that the initial lineup was somewhat uninspiring. Consisting of *Eternal Ring*, *Kessen*, *Stepping Selection*, *Street Fighter EX3*, *DrumMania*, *Ridge Racer V*, and *Fantavision*, it continued the long-running Japanese tradition of launching systems without any killer apps to speak of.

Of course, the PS2's initial success had as much to do with its movie playback features as with its software selection; the PS2 was actually cheaper than the vast majority of Japanese DVD players that were for sale at the time of its launch. Quite a few people picked up systems simply for the movies...the fact that they'd eventually have access to a solid software library was a definite bonus. Not all game developers took kindly to this fact, including *Metal Gear* creator Hideo Kojima. "I personally would like to create a game that effectively disables players from watching DVD movies," he groused to *OPM*.

Not that he really had to make the effort; a notorious flaw in the first batch of memory cards sometimes caused all of a user's data and the DVD playback software to be spontaneously deleted. Those whose memory cards didn't go belly-up ended up with more of a DVD player than they initially realized, though: A flaw in the DVD playback software included in the first batch of PS2 memory cards allowed users to bypass the strict region encoding featured on most DVDs. Hollywood was not amused, and Sony scrambled to force users to upgrade their firmware. (This might sound familiar to anyone who picked up an early Japanese PSP, as the portable system's earliest firmware was far more hackable than Sony intended.)

AMERICA GETS EMOTIONAL

The good news is that by the time the PS2 came to America, the kinks had been almost entirely ironed out. Sony promised October 26, 2000, would play host to the largest consumer launch in history—and it did. Sony's ability to get PlayStation 2 consoles into the hands of consumers was hampered by a lack of availability rather than enthusiasm, and for the six months following its launch, PS2 hardware was available in incredibly short supply, with a lengthy waiting list at most retailers.

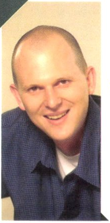
THE U.S. LAUNCH LINEUP WAS FAR SUPERIOR TO JAPAN'S.

For its U.S. debut, the PS2 was a much friendlier $299, although opportunists were more than happy to resell it for twice that on eBay. The memory card issues had been resolved, and Hollywood

HYPE:
PUNDITRY OR PROPHECY?

The world was pretty excited about the PlayStation 2 back in the day. In fact, it's really a little embarrassing just how wide-eyed everyone got. The PS2 has turned out to be an impressive system with an incredible library, no question, but some of the prelaunch hype makes us cringe a little. Did we really believe those things? Did we really say those things?

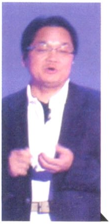
Yeah, we really did. And now, armed with half a decade of hindsight, we're looking back over the biggest claims people made about the system and sorting the empty punditry from the prophetic wisdom.



THE HYPE: "Initially, our focus is games. This is a game system—it will be the best game system the world has ever seen and is going to deliver some unbelievable game content." — *Phil Harrison, then VP of Research and Development at Sony CEA*

> "THE BEST GAME SYSTEM THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN."

THE VERDICT: Prophecy. Dreamcast advocates wouldn't buy the "best ever" claim, but Sony was smart to abandon its talk of the PS2 as a digital hub/consumer appliance and get on with the business of getting some great games on the system. The DVD player gave it an early advantage over the Dreamcast, but the games are what sustained it against the Xbox and GameCube.



THE HYPE: "You can communicate to a new cyber city. Did you see the movie *The Matrix*? Same interface. Same concept. Starting next year, you can jack into the Matrix!" — *Ken Kutaragi, "the father of PlayStation"*

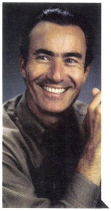
> "STARTING NEXT YEAR, YOU CAN JACK INTO THE MATRIX!"

THE VERDICT: Punditry. Wow, Kutaragi, did *you* actually see *The Matrix*? Maybe comparing your product to a bleak world where humans exist as nothing but vegetative batteries for their robot overlords isn't the best way to promote it. Not that we're complaining about Kutaragi's empty promise. We're all for immersive experiences, but we're not too enthusiastic about the prospect of plugging our PS2s directly into our brains.

THE HYPE: "I'm sure that we're going to be looking at totally new genres with the PlayStation 2. Its sheer power enables us to create much more cinematic experiences, and fitting that into games will be really interesting. What you're going to see is games that feel more like movies." — *Peter Molyneux, designer of such games as* Populous *and* Black & White

> "WE'RE GOING TO BE LOOKING AT TOTALLY NEW GENRES."

THE VERDICT: Prophecy. While the current generation of gaming represents more of an evolutionary era than the time of unbridled originality we saw with 32-bit machines, the PS2 has done its share for fostering creativity. The most obvious example? The "emergent sandbox" genre popularized by *Grand Theft Auto III*. Plus, we're pretty fond of *Katamari Damacy*, however you want to categorize that.



THE HYPE: "It's historic, a mass-market appliance that fundamentally changes society in the same way the printing press did." — *Trip Hawkins, cofounder of Electronic Arts and founder of 3DO*

> "IT'S HISTORIC. IT FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGES SOCIETY."

THE VERDICT: Punditry. The printing press enabled widespread literacy, ending the monopoly over education long enjoyed by religious institutions and sparking the rise of science and democracy in the West. The PS2 gave us *Ratchet & Clank*. Clank rules, but we're going to have to give a slight edge to the printing press here. Ah, Mr. Hawkins, you're always such a...trip.

executives could sleep easy knowing that it was impossible for someone to watch foreign DVDs on the American console, thanks to the tightened region encoding. More important, the U.S. launch lineup was far superior to Japan's, tbenefiting from the seven-month difference in release dates. Fighting-game enthusiasts were graced with *Tekken Tag Tournament*, while sports fans had EA's superlative *SSX* to look forward to. Even classic-gaming aficionados were accounted for with Konami's *Gradius III & IV*.

If there was a sour note at the launch, it was the fact that gamers were finally able to compare the real system to the powerhouse painted by prerelease hype...and unfortunately, the reality fell short of many people's expectations. The problem was that gamers expected every game to look as spectacular as the demos Sony used to showcase the hardware, including a real-time demonstration of *Final Fantasy VIII*'s ballroom scene and a facial-animation sequence that looked on par with anything Hollywood had ever produced.

Despite generally good graphics, all of the launch titles were, well, launch titles. Additionally, the PS2's lack of full-screen anti-aliasing made the games' visuals appear to be much jaggier than those found in most Dreamcast games. And while games like *Ridge Racer V* and *Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore* looked great, other launch titles like *Evergrace* and *Orphen*...didn't.

There's speculation that Sony overstated the PS2's power in order to steal thunder from Sega's Dreamcast. After all, the Dreamcast had a one-year head start on the PS2 and offered both impressive 3D performance and a great library of software—making it a formidable threat to Sony's plans. If that's the case, then it worked: The Dreamcast foundered in the face of the onslaught of PS2 hype, leaving Sony free to concentrate on shoring up its defenses against the 2001 launches of Microsoft's Xbox and Nintendo's GameCube.

Despite the occasional disappointment, Sony's machine was a hit. As of June 2005, more than 90 million PS2s had shipped worldwide. That's short of the 100 million predicted by analysts before the system's launch, but more than enough to put the PS2 far into the lead in the current console race—and ahead of the PS1, which had sold a mere 75 million units by this point in its life span.

> SONY HAS A TOUGH ACT TO FOLLOW WITH ITS UPCOMING PS3.

The PS2 is an exceptional machine whose power easily blew away anything that had come before it. And after five years, it's clearly not just a success—it's on the fast track to becoming the most popular and successful console in gaming history. It has generated billions of dollars of profit for Sony...and wasted hundreds of billions of man-hours. If there's a downside to what the PS2 has achieved, it's that Sony has a tough act to follow with its upcoming PlayStation 3. Whatever the future holds, it's pretty likely that the PS2 factors in there. « *Jeremy Parish*

REVIEW ARCHIVE

Game names in black bars indicate a Greatest Hits title. Names in red indicate a score of 5 out of 5. The ⚡ symbol indicates the game supports online play.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
PSP			
Ape Escape: On the Loose	Sony CEA	●●●	93
Archer Maclean's Mercury	Ignition	●●●◖	94
ATV Offroad Fury: Blazin' Trails	Sony CEA	●●●	94
Coded Arms	Konami	●●	95
Darkstalkers Chronicle: TCT	Capcom	●●●	93
Dead to Rights: Reckoning	Namco	●●◖	96
Death, Jr.	Konami	●●◖	96
Dynasty Warriors	Koei	●●●	92
FIFA Soccer	EA Sports	●●●●	94
Gretzky NHL	Sony CEA	●●●◖	93
Hot Shots Golf: Open Tee	Sony CEA	●●●●	95
Lumines	Ubisoft	●●●●	92
Metal Gear Acid	Konami	●●●●	92
Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	Rockstar	●●●●	96
MLB	Sony CEA	●●●◖	94
MVP Baseball	EA Sports	●●●	95
NBA	Sony CEA	●●◖	93
NBA Street Showdown	EA Sports Big	●●●	94
Need for Speed Underground Rivals	EA Games	●●●◖	92
NFL Street 2: Unleashed	EA Sports Big	●●●	93
Rengoku: The Tower of Purgatory	Konami	●	93
Ridge Racer	Namco	●●●●◖	92
Smart Bomb	Eidos	●◖	93
Spider-Man 2	Activision	●●●◖	93
Tiger Woods PGA Tour	EA Sports	●●●●	93
Tony Hawk's Underground 2: Remix	Activision	●●●●	93
Twisted Metal: Head-On	Sony CEA	●●●●	93
Untold Legends: Brotherhood...	Sony Online	●●●	92
Wipeout Pure	Sony CEA	●●●●	93
World Tour Soccer	Sony CEA	●●●	93
PS2			
.hack//INFECTION	Bandai	●●●◖	65
.hack//MUTATION	Bandai	●●●●	69
.hack//OUTBREAK	Bandai	●●●●	73
.hack//QUARANTINE	Bandai	●●●●	76
18 Wheeler American Pro Trucker	Acclaim	●●●●	52
4x4 EVO	GOD Games	●●●●	44
2002 FIFA World Cup	EA Sports	●●●●	58
Ace Combat 04: Shattered Skies	**Namco**	●●●●◖	**51**
Ace Combat 5: The Unsung War	Namco	●●●●	87
Activision Anthology	Activision	●●●●	64
Aero Elite: Combat Academy	Sega	●●●	67
The Adventures of Cookie & Cream	Agetec	●●●◖	44
Aggressive Inline	Acclaim	●●●●◖	59
Airblade	Namco	●●●●	53
Airforce Delta Strike	Konami	●●●	78
Alias	Acclaim	●●◖	81
Alien Hominid	0-3 Entertainment	●●●●	88
Aliens Versus Predator: Extinction	EA Games	●●●◖	72
All-Star Baseball 2002	Acclaim	●●●◖	44
All-Star Baseball 2003	Acclaim	●●●◖	56
All-Star Baseball 2004	Acclaim	●●●	67
⚡All-Star Baseball 2005	Acclaim	●●◖	80
Alter Echo	THQ	●●	73
American Idol	Codemasters	●	77
⚡Amplitude	Sony CEA	●●●●	68
Antz Extreme Racing	Empire	●◖	61
Ape Escape 2	Ubisoft	●●●●◖	70
Ape Escape: Primed & Pumped	Ubisoft	●●◖	88
Aqua Aqua	3DO	●●	42
Arc the Lad: End of Darkness	Namco	●●	95
Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits	Sony CEA	●●●●	70
Arctic Thunder	Midway	●	50
⚡Area 51	Midway	●●●●	90
Armored Core 2	Agetec	●●●	39
Armored Core 2: Another Age	Agetec	●●●◖	48
Armored Core 3	Agetec	●●●◖	61
Armored Core: Nexus	Agetec	●●	85
Army Men: Air Attack	3DO	●●●◖	44
Army Men: Green Rogue	3DO	●●	45
Army Men RTS	3DO	●●●●	56
Army Men: Sarge's Heroes 2	3DO	●●◖	45
Asterix & Obelix Kick Buttix	Atari	●●◖	85
Astro Boy	Sega	●●●	85
Atari Anthology	Atari	●●	89
Atelier Iris: Eternal Mana	NIS America	●●●◖	94
Athens 2004	Sony CEA	●●◖	83
ATV Offroad Fury	**Sony CEA**	●●●●	**42**
⚡ATV Offroad Fury 2	**Sony CEA**	●●●●	**64**
⚡ATV Offroad Fury 3	Sony CEA	●●●●	88
ATV Quad Power Racing 2	Acclaim	●●●●	66
⚡Auto Modellista	Capcom	●●◖	69
Backyard Baseball	Atari	●●◖	81
Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try This at Home	Eidos	●●◖	75
Backyard Wrestling 2: There Goes the Neighborhood	Eidos	●◖	89
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	**Interplay**	●●●●◖	**52**
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II	Interplay	●●●◖	77
Barbarian	Titus	●●	57
The Bard's Tale	Vivendi Universal	●●●●◖	86
Bass Strike Virtual Fishing Tournament	THQ	●◖	51
Batman Begins	EA Games	●●●	96
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	Ubisoft	●●	74
Batman: Vengeance	Ubisoft	●●●	51
Battle Assault 3	Bandai	●●◖	88
Battle Engine Aquila	Atari	●●●◖	65
Battlestar Galactica	Vivendi Universal	●●●	76
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubisoft	●●●●	75
Big Mutha Truckers	Empire	●●●	71
Bionicle: The Game	EA Games	●●◖	75
Black & Bruised	Majesco	●●●●	67
Blade II	Activision	●●	62
Blood Omen 2	Eidos	●●●◖	57
BloodRayne	Majesco	●●●◖	63
BloodRayne 2	Majesco	●●●●◖	87
Blood Will Tell	Sega	●●●●	87
Bloody Roar 3	Activision	●●●◖	47
Bloody Roar 4	Konami	●	75
Blowout	Majesco	●●●	77
BMX XXX	Acclaim	●◖	65
Bombastic	Capcom	●●◖	72
Breath of Fire: Dragon Quarter	Capcom	●●●●	67
Britney's Dance Beat	THQ	●●●●	58
⚡Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30	Ubisoft	●●●	92
The Bouncer	Square EA	●●●	42
Buffy the Vampire Slayer: CB	Sierra/Fox	●●●◖	73
Bujingai: The Forsaken City	Bam	●●●●	82
Burnout	Acclaim	●●●●◖	52
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	Acclaim	●●●●	63
⚡Burnout 3: Takedown	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**85**
Butt-Ugly Martians: Zoom or Doom!	Crave	●●	73
Cabela's Big Game Hunter	**Activision**	●●◖	**67**
Cabela's Big Game Hunter 2005 Adv.	Activision	●●●	90
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts	**Activision**	●●◖	**76**
Cabela's Deer Hunt 2004 Season	Activision	●●◖	74
Cabela's Deer Hunt 2005 Season	Activision	●●●●◖	85
⚡Call of Duty: Finest Hour	Activision	●●●●	89
Capcom Fighting Evolution	Capcom	●◖	88
Capcom vs. SNK 2	Capcom	●●●●◖	51
Carmen Sandiego: The Secret of the Stolen Drums	Bam	●●◖	77
CART Fury	Midway	●	47
Casper: Spirit Dimensions	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	50
Castlevania: Lament of Innocence	Konami	●●●●	74
The Cat in the Hat	Vivendi Universal	●●	76
Catwoman	EA Games	●	84
⚡Champions of Norrath: Realms of EverQuest	**Sony Online**	●●●●◖	**78**
⚡Champions: Return to Arms	Sony Online	●●●●◖	90
Chaos Legion	Capcom	●●●◖	70
⚡Chessmaster	Ubisoft	●●●◖	70
Choplifter: Crisis Shield	Xicat	●●●	69
ChoroQ	Atlus	●●●◖	86
City Crisis	Take-Two	●●●	48
Clock Tower 3	Capcom	●●●	68
Cold Fear	Ubisoft	●●●	92
Cold Winter	Vivendi Universal	●●●◖	93
Colin McRae Rally 3	**Codemasters**	●●●●●	**68**
Colosseum: Road to Freedom	Koei	●●◖	95
Combat Elite: WWII Paratroopers	Acclaim	●●●	83
Commandos 2: Men of Courage	Eidos	●●	62
Conflict: Desert Storm	**Gotham Games**	●◖	**63**
Conflict: Desert Storm II	Gotham Games	●●●	74
Conflict: Vietnam	Global Star	●●◖	86
Conflict Zone	Ubisoft	●●◖	63
Constantine	THQ	●●●	92
Contra: Shattered Soldier	Konami	●●●●◖	64
Corvette	Global Star	●●●◖	81
Cool Boarders 2001	Sony CEA	●●●●	46
Crash Bandicoot: Wrath of Cortex	**Universal**	●●●◖	**51**
⚡Crash 'N' Burn	Eidos	●●	87
Crash Nitro Kart	**Vivendi Universal**	●●●◖	**76**
Crash Twinsanity	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	86
Crazy Taxi	**Acclaim**	●●●●	**46**
Crimson Sea 2	Koei	●●●◖	80
Crimson Tears	Capcom	●●●◖	83
Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon	Ubisoft	●●	74
Culdcept	SNK	●●●◖	75
Dark Angel: Vampire Apocalypse	Metro3D	●◖	49
Dark Cloud	**Sony CEA**	●●●●◖	**46**
Dark Cloud 2	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**66**
Dark Summit	THQ	●●●◖	52
Darkwatch	Capcom	●●●	96
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2	**Acclaim**	●●●◖	**50**
DDR Extreme	Konami	●●●●	85
DDRMAX	Konami	●●●●	63
DDRMAX 2	Konami	●●●●	74
Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore	Tecmo	●●●●◖	39
Dead to Rights	**Namco**	●●●	**65**
Dead to Rights II	Namco	●●	94
Death by Degrees	Namco	●◖	90
Def Jam Vendetta	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●	**67**
Def Jam Fight for NY	EA Games	●●●●◖	85
Defender	Midway	●●●◖	62
Destroy All Humans!	THQ	●●●	95
⚡Destruction Derby Arenas	Gathering	●●◖	80
Deus Ex: The Conspiracy	Eidos	●●●●◖	56
Devil May Cry	**Capcom**	●●●●●	**50**
Devil May Cry 2	**Capcom**	●●●	**66**
Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening	Capcom	●●●●◖	91
Digimon Rumble Arena 2	Bandai	●●●	88
Digimon World 4	Bandai	●●	94
Digital Hitz Factory	XS Games	●●●●	76
Dino Stalker	Capcom	●●●◖	61
Disaster Report	Agetec	●●●◖	65
Disgaea: Hour of Darkness	Atlus	●●●●	72
Disney Golf	EA Games	●●●●	61
Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure	Activision	●●●●	73
Disney's PK: Out of the Shadows	Ubisoft	●●◖	63
Disney's Treasure Planet	Sony CEA	●●●◖	64
A Dog's Life	Hip Interactive	●●	84
Donald Duck: Goin' Quackers	Ubisoft	●●●◖	42
Downforce	Titus	●●	57
Downhill Domination	Sony CEA	●●●●	71
Dr. Muto	Midway	●●◖	63
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai	**Atari**	●●●◖	**65**
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2	**Atari**	●●◖	**76**
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 3	Atari	●●●●	88
Dragon Ball Z: Sagas	Atari	●●◖	93
Dragon Rage	3DO	●◖	54
Drakan: The Ancients' Gates	Sony CEA	●●●●	53
Drakengard	Square Enix USA	●●	78
DRIV3R	Atari	●●●◖	83
Driven	Bam	●	52
Driving Emotion Type-S	Square EA	●●◖	41
Drome Racers	EA Games	●●◖	64

RPG LOVE

You don't often hear it in the same breath as *Final Fantasy* or listed alongside *Dragon Quest* on a best-RPGs list, but *Dark Cloud 2* is one damn fine game. The invention system offers near-limitless playability, and the gorgeous graphic style aims to please.

THE HILLS ARE ALIVE

Q. What do Greek mythology and tricked-out mountain bikes have in common?

A. Incog, developer of both *God of War* and the surprisingly entertaining extreme-sports game *Downhill Domination*.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Dropship	Bam	●●●●	57
Dual Hearts	Atlus	●●●	61
Duel Masters	Atari	●●●	89
The Dukes of Hazzard: Return of the General Lee	Ubisoft	●●●◖	87
Dynasty Tactics	Koei	●●●●◖	61
Dynasty Tactics 2	Koei	●●●●	74
Dynasty Warriors 2	Koei	●●●●	38
Dynasty Warriors 3	Koei	●●●●	52
Dynasty Warriors 3: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●◖	65
Dynasty Warriors 4	**Koei**	**●●●●**	**85**
Dynasty Warriors 4: Empires	Koei	●●●●◖	68
Dynasty Warriors 4: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●◖	75
Dynasty Warriors 5	Koei	●●●◖	92
Ecco the Dolphin: Defender of the Future	Acclaim	●●◖	56
Echo Night: Beyond	Agetec	●●●	84
Egg Mania: Eggstreme Madness	Kemco	●●◖	61
⚡eJay Clubworld	Crave	●●	73
Endgame	Empire	●●	59
Enter the Matrix	**Atari**	**●●●**	**71**
Enthusia Professional Racing	Konami	●●◖	93
Ephemeral Fantasia	Konami	●◖	49
Escape From Monkey Island	**LucasArts**	**●●●●●**	**46**
⚡ESPN College Hoops	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	76
⚡ESPN College Hoops 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	88
ESPN International Track & Field	Konami	●●●	39
ESPN International Winter Sports 2002	Konami	●●●●	54
⚡ESPN Major League Baseball	ESPN Videogames	●●●◖	80
ESPN MLS Extra Time	Konami	●●	44
ESPN National Hockey Night	Konami	●◖	45
ESPN NBA 2Night	Konami	●●	42
ESPN NBA 2Night 2002	Konami	●●●	56
⚡ESPN NBA 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●	87
⚡ESPN NBA Basketball	**ESPN Videogames**	**●●●●●**	**75**
⚡ESPN NFL Football	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	72
⚡ESPN NFL 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●	84
⚡ESPN NHL Hockey	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	73
⚡ESPN NHL 2K5	ESPN Videogames	●●●●◖	85
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding	Konami	●●●	41
ESPN Winter X Games Snowboarding 2002	Konami	●●●	53
ESPN X Games Skateboarding	Konami	●●●●	49
Eternal Ring	Agetec	●●	38
Eve of Extinction	Eidos	●●◖	56
Everblue 2	Capcom	●●●	66
Evergrace	Agetec	●●	39
⚡EverQuest Online Adventures	Sony Online	●●◖	66
⚡EverQuest Online Adventures: Frontiers	Sony Online	●●●◖	77
Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick	THQ	●●●	70
Evil Twin	Ubisoft	●●	52
Evolution Skateboarding	Konami	●●◖	63
Evolution Snowboarding	Konami	●	65
Extermination	Sony CEA	●●◖	48
Extreme-G III	Acclaim	●●●●	50
EyeToy: AntiGrav	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	87
EyeToy: Groove	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	80
EyeToy: Play 2	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	96
F1 2001	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**52**
F1 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	60
F1 Career Challenge	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**71**
F1 Championship	Ubisoft	●●●●	43
F1 Championship Season 2000	EA Sports	●●◖	41
Fairly OddParents: Shadow Showdown	THQ	●●●◖	88
Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel	Interplay	●●◖	78
Fantastic 4	Activision	●●●◖	96
Fantavision	Sony CEA	●●●●	40
Fatal Frame	Tecmo	●●●●	55
Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly	Tecmo	●●●●	77
Ferrari F355 Challenge	Sega	●●	61
FIFA 2001 Major League Soccer	EA Sports	●●●●◖	39
FIFA 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	51
FIFA Soccer 2003	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**63**
⚡FIFA Soccer 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**75**
⚡FIFA Soccer 2005	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**86**
⚡FIFA Street	EA Sports	●●◖	91
Fight Club	Vivendi Universal	●◖	87
⚡Fight Night 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●**	**80**
⚡Fight Night Round 2	EA Sports	●●●●◖	91
Fighter Maker 2	Agetec	●◖	64
Final Fantasy X	**Square EA**	**●●●●●**	**53**
Final Fantasy X-2	**Square Enix USA**	**●●●●●**	**75**
⚡Final Fantasy XI	**Square Enix USA**	**●●●●●**	**78**
⚡Final Fantasy XI: Chains of Promathia	Square Enix USA	●●●●	87
Finding Nemo	**THQ**	**●●●◖**	**71**
Finny the Fish and the Seven Waters	Natsume	●●	91
Fireblade	Midway	●●◖	59
Fisherman's Challenge	Konami	●●	67
FlatOut	Empire Interactive	●●◖	95
Flipnic: Ultimate Pinball	Capcom	●●●	95
Ford Racing 2	Gotham Games	●●◖	76
Ford Racing 3	2K Games	●●●	94
Forever Kingdom	Agetec	●◖	53
Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone	Atari	●●●◖	86
Formula One 2001	Sony CEA	●●◖	50
Freaky Flyers	Midway	●●●◖	72
Freedom Fighters	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**73**
Freekstyle	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●**	**59**
Freestyle Metal X	Midway	●●●	71
Frequency	Sony CEA	●●●◖	52
Frogger: The Great Quest	Konami	●◖	53
Frogger's Adventure: The Rescue	Konami	●●◖	76
Front Mission 4	Square Enix	●●●●	82
Fugitive Hunter	Encore	●	76
⚡Full Spectrum Warrior	THQ	●●●●	93
Fullmetal Alchemist	Square Enix	●●●	89
Fullmetal Alchemist 2: Curse of Crimson Elixir	Square Enix	●●●	96
Fur Fighters: Viggo's Revenge	Acclaim	●●●	46
Futurama	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	72
Future Tactics: The Uprising	Crave	●●●◖	81
G1 Jockey 3	Koei	●●●◖	69
Gadget Racers	Conspiracy	●●●◖	50
Galactic Wrestling Featuring Ultimate Muscle	Bandai	●●◖	82
Galerians: Ash	Sammy	●◖	66
Gallop Racer	Tecmo	●●	48
Gallop Racer 2003: A New Breed	Tecmo	●●●	69
Gallop Racer 2004	Tecmo	●●●●	85
Gauntlet: Dark Legacy	Midway	●●●◖	46
The Getaway	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●**	**66**
The Getaway: Black Monday	Sony CEA	●●	89
Get on da Mic	Eidos	●●	87
Ghosthunter	Namco	●●◖	84
Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex	Bandai	●●	87
⚡Ghost Recon 2	Ubisoft	●●●	89
Giants: Citizen Kabuto	Interplay	●●●◖	51
Gitaroo-Man	Koei	●●●◖	53
Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance	Acclaim	●●	75
Gladius	LucasArts	●●●●	74
Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde	Jaleco	●●◖	76
God of War	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**92**
GoDai: Elemental Force	3DO	●◖	54
Godzilla: Save the Earth	Atari	●●◖	88
⚡GoldenEye: Rogue Agent	EA Games	●●●	89
Gradius III and IV	Konami	●●◖	39
Gradius V	Konami	●●●◖	85
Graffiti Kingdom	Hot-B	●●●●	93
Gran Turismo 3: A-spec	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**46**
Gran Turismo 4	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**91**
Grand Prix Challenge	Atari	●●●◖	68
Grand Theft Auto III	**Rockstar**	**●●●●●**	**52**
Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	**Rockstar**	**●●●●●**	**87**
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	**Rockstar**	**●●●●●**	**63**
Grandia II	Ubisoft	●●●◖	53
Grandia Xtreme	Enix	●●●◖	62
Gravity Games Bike: Street, Vert, Dirt	Midway	◖	61
The Great Escape	Gotham Games	●●●◖	72
⚡Gretzky NHL 2005	Sony CEA	●●◖	88
⚡Growlanser Generations	Working Designs	●●●●	88
GTC Africa	Majesco	●●◖	58
Guilty Gear Isuka	Sammy	●●●●	86
Guilty Gear X	Majesco/Sammy	●●●●	51
Guilty Gear X2	Sammy	●●●●	66
Gungrave	Sega	●●●◖	61
Gungrave: Overdose	Mastiff	●●●◖	86
GunGriffon Blaze	Working Designs	●●●◖	39
The Guy Game	Gathering	●	85
Half-Life	**Sierra**	**●●●●●**	**51**
Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup	**EA Games**	**●●●**	**75**
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone	EA Games	●◖	76
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	**EA Games**	**●●●◖**	**64**
Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban	EA Games	●●●●	82
Harvest Moon: Save the Homeland	Natsume	●●●●	51
Haunted Mansion	TDK	●●●	77
Haunting Ground	Capcom	●●◖	93
Haven: Call of the King	Midway	●●●◖	64
Headhunter	Acclaim	●●●	57
Headhunter: Redemption	Sega	●●●	86
Herdy Gerdy	Eidos	●●●	56
Heroes of Might and Magic	3DO	●●◖	46
Hidden Invasion	Conspiracy	●●●	60
High Heat MLB 2002	3DO	●●●●	44
High Heat MLB 2003	3DO	●●●●◖	55
High Heat MLB 2004	**3DO**	**●●●●●**	**67**
Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	●●●●◖	81
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin	**Eidos**	**●●●●◖**	**63**
The Hobbit	Vivendi Universal	●●●◖	76
Hot Shots Golf 3	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●**	**55**
⚡Hot Shots Golf Fore!	Sony CEA	●●●◖	85
⚡Hot Wheels: Stunt Track Challenge	THQ	●●●◖	89
Hot Wheels: Velocity X	THQ	●●◖	64
The Hulk	**Vivendi Universal**	**●●●●**	**70**
Hunter: The Reckoning–Wayward	Interplay	●●◖	72
Hypersonic Xtreme	Majesco	●●◖	67
I-Ninja	Namco	●●●◖	75
Ico	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**50**
In the Groove	RedOctane	●●●◖	94
The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction	Vivendi Universal	●●●●◖	96
The Incredibles	THQ	●●●◖	88
Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb	LucasArts	●●●	71
Indy Car Series	Codemasters	●●●	71
Intellivision Lives!	Crave	●●●◖	77
Inuyasha: The Secret of the Cursed Mask	Bandai	●	89
Island Extreme Stunts	EA Games	●●●◖	65
The Italian Job	Eidos	●●	72
Jade Cocoon 2	Ubisoft	●●●◖	53
Jak and Daxter: The Precursor Legacy	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**52**
Jak II	**Sony CEA**	**●●●◖**	**74**
Jak 3	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	87
James Bond 007: Agent Under Fire	**EA Games**	**●●●●**	**52**
James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing	**EA Games**	**●●●●◖**	**79**
James Bond 007: NightFire	**EA Games**	**●●●●◖**	**64**
James Cameron's Dark Angel	Sierra	●●	65
Jeopardy!	Atari	●●◖	77
Jeremy McGrath Supercross World	Acclaim	●	53
Jet X20	Sony CEA	●●	63
Jimmy Neutron: Attack of the Twonkies	THQ	●●●	88
Jonny Moseley Mad Trix	3DO	●◖	54
Judge Dredd: Dredd vs. Death	Evolved Games	●●◖	80
Juiced	THQ	●●●◖	94
The Jungle Book: Rhythm n' Groove	Ubisoft	●●●	69
Jurassic Park: Op. Genesis	Universal Int.	●●●●◖	68
K-1 World Grand Prix	Konami	●●	71
Karaoke Revolution	Konami	●●●●	75
Karaoke Revolution Volume 2	Konami	●●●●◖	83
Karaoke Revolution Volume 3	Konami	●●●●◖	87
Katamari Damacy	Namco	●●●●◖	86
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer	Activision	●●●◖	61
Kengo: Master of Bushido	Crave	●●●	42
Kessen	EA Games	●●●	39
Kessen II	Koei	●●●	51
Kessen III	Koei	●●●	91
kill.switch	Namco	●●●●◖	75
Killer 7	Capcom	●●◖	95
⚡Killzone	Sony CEA	●●●●	87
Kinetica	Sony CEA	●●●●◖	50
King Arthur	Konami	●	88
King of Fighters 2000/2001	SNK Playmore	●●◖	76
King of Fighters 2002/2003	SNK Playmore	●●●●	88

STYLIN'

The motocross game *Freekstyle* was one of two games to come out of EA Sports Big's attempt to translate *SSX*'s over-the-top action into other sports. The other was the PS2 version of *Sled Storm*. Both games were good, but not great.

OPM DEMO CLASSICS: SLY COOPER 1 & 2

REVISIT TWO UNDERAPPRECIATED GEMS

OPM # 59

EXCLUSIVE! PS2 DEMO DVD INSIDE!
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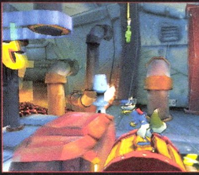

"We're number two. We try harder." Sure, that famous maxim belongs to an auto rental company, but it could just as easily apply to Sucker Punch's charming *Sly Cooper* series. Sony's mascot franchise definitely has a following, yet it generally finds itself shuffled to the sidelines while Jak and Ratchet and pals hog the spotlight. Despite the *Sly* games' relative obscurity—or perhaps because of it—Sucker Punch takes a huge leap forward with each new chapter of the series.

Just how far has the noble thief come? See for yourself with the hands-on demos of his first two adventures featured on this month's disc. From the promising-but-frustrating original to the beautifully varied adventure of its sequel, the *Sly* franchise sidesteps predictability as nimbly as its stealthy hero.

Sly's emphasis on plot and continuity is one of its greatest strengths, which may be a pleasant surprise for gamers weaned on old-school platformers whose story lines rarely strayed from such gripping territory as "Bowser kidnapped the princess again" or "Dr. Robotnik is probably up to no good with those chaos emeralds (again)." Unlike the unambitious premises of action games gone by, *Sly*'s narrative feels like a crucial component of the series.

The games' cast is just as intriguing as their plots are. Sly may be a thief, but he's good-natured and honorable despite his shady vocation, bringing to mind the protagonist of Disney's *Robin Hood*. Meanwhile, his companions Bentley and Murray fall under the "weakling brainiac" and "dumb muscle" umbrellas. And international detective Carmelita Fox plays the role of Zenigata to Sly's wily Lupin III (except that Carmelita adds a hint of sexual tension).

These comparisons with classic works of animation are no accident. Perhaps more than any other series in gaming, the *Sly* games bring to mind old-fashioned Saturday-morning cartoons. And the connection goes far beyond the obvious cel-shaded talking animals; Sucker Punch employs a number of classic animation techniques, giving the characters an exaggerated sense of motion that feels loose and entirely natural—an impressive feat by any measure, but even more so for the fact that the lively animation never interferes with the gameplay.

As in many cartoons, the color black is used only sparingly. That may seem surprising, given the nocturnal nature of most of *Sly*'s missions, but the palette of deep purples, reds, and blues creates a rich, vibrant world that evokes the sort of big-budget cartoons that Disney created back when Walt himself was large and in charge. It also handily prevents the overly dark, grainy look common to games that dabble in stealth.

The stealth-oriented gameplay is where *Sly* has progressed the most. The original game tried to mix one-hit-kill arcade action with *Splinter Cell* sneaking, with mixed results. While it doesn't hold up quite as well as its sequel, Sly's debut, *Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus,* delivers solid action and introduces a number of conventions essential to the experience, most notably the contextual thieving skills. By tapping the Circle button at the right time, players

OPM # 79

MORE EXCLUSIVES THAN ANY OTHER PS2 MAG!
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SLY 2
BAND OF THIEVES
WORLD-EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK!
KILLZONE
HITMAN CONTRACTS
DRIV3R
RAINBOW SIX 3
ASTRO BOY
SAMURAI JACK

ROCKET
robot on wheels

DIRTY LITTLE SECRET

Sly made Sucker Punch really famous, but the studio is also responsible for a quirky Nintendo 64 platformer called *Rocket: Robot on Wheels.* The game stars a plucky young maintenance robot pitted against the evil machinations of a nefarious villain: a raccoon. A raccoon named Jojo.

can make Sly perform a variety of situationally appropriate actions with minimal fuss, removing a great deal of grief from tenuous situations, such as running along tightropes.

There's a pleasant old-school feel to *Thievius Raccoonus*; the enemies are merciless but a bit stupid, and the platforming challenges come on strong and ramp up steadily in difficulty as the levels go by. It doesn't play strictly by the old rules, though—while the missions come one after the other, the game allows a certain degree of freedom within each. This comes through clearly in the demo; once you shimmy up the pipes to sneak past the front gate, you make your way to a hub-style area that leads to several different challenges. Climb the bridge and you can participate in a challenging racing minigame, or enter the casino to the right of the main building and face off against a hazardous security system. Either way, your goal is to collect three keys in order to unlock a revving automobile and smash an entrance into Muggshot's hideout.

The 2004 sequel, *Sly 2: Band of Thieves,* only improves on the foundation established by its predecessor. Most obviously, it gives Sly a life bar and a pair of playable companions, reducing the frustration level while increasing the variety of gameplay. The game's environments are expanded from typical 3D platform areas to massive free-roaming worlds that offer Sly and friends open-ended pathways for completing their objectives.

Even the objectives themselves are beefed up with an *Ocean's Eleven*–esque heist format. As Sly, Murray, and Bentley move from city to city, they perform a series of missions that builds up to a grand climax. The demo offers an excellent taste of this caper-style approach; after a museum heist goes awry, the band of thieves decides to stake out the local crime lord's operation to recover the missing pieces of Clockwerk, the evil bird turned robot who was defeated at the end of the first adventure. Sly begins by tailing crime lord Dmitri and learning the passcode to his lair, Bentley follows up by sabotaging Dmitri's discotheque, Murray disables the alarms around the city, and so forth, building up to a climax that draws on the actions of the previous missions.

Each of the heroes in *Band of Thieves* plays with a completely different feel and style. While Sly is his usual self (with the capacity to be even stealthier, thanks to the freedom offered by the wide-open environments), Bentley is more precise—his weaker melee skills are offset by his ability to snipe with stun darts and drop high explosives. Murray, on the other hand, is about sheer brute force, with a powerful attack, a stunning belly drop, and the ability to toss furniture, debris, and even enemies around with ease.

NARRATIVE IS A CRUCIAL COMPONENT OF THE SERIES.

The third game in the series, *Sly 3: Honor Among Thieves,* expands even further on these innovations...as you can see for yourself with the demo on next month's disc. Fortunately, the *Sly* games are short and sweet, leaving you plenty of time to catch up on what you've missed before *Honor* hits the stores. It's usually painless to pass up older action games in favor of the latest sequel, but *Sly*'s winning combination of story continuity and evolving game design makes it a series you'll want to play in its entirety. « *Jeremy Parish*

PS1-DERLAND

TWO MINUS ONE EQUALS...ZERO?

JEREMY PARISH
When he's not trying to reclaim his vanished youth with obsolete games, Jeremy works as 1UP.com's features editor and charming mascot. Check out his blog at toastyfrog.1UP.com.

October marks the fifth anniversary of the PlayStation 2's U.S. debut, but let's be honest: The system has only been worth owning for about four of those years. Find the word "compelling" in a thesaurus, then look up the exact opposite. That'll do nicely to describe the PS2's year-one library.

The system's software is first rate these days, but the single early PS2 release that really had gamers salivating was *Zone of the Enders*. (You know, the free game that came with the *Metal Gear Solid 2* demo.) Consumers in Japan snapped up the PS2 that first year, but it was mainly to get ahold of an inexpensive DVD player—the PS2 was cheaper than a stand-alone Japanese DVD machine. The fact that it played *Tekken Tag Tournament* was just a fun bonus! Things were different in America, where any schmo could wander into Wal-Mart and snag a player for a whole lot less than the PS2. And with a whole lot less hassle, thanks to those PS2 hardware shortages that plagued the 2000 Christmas season.

But when the PS2 finally arrived in stores in decent quantities and gamers no longer had to sell state secrets to the Communists in order to afford one on eBay, they were intrigued to that find the Emotion Engine–powered machine came with the ability to play PS1 games. For a fair while, the PS1 was churning out much better titles than what you could find on its successor: *Final Fantasy IX, Fear Effect 2: Retro Helix, Dragon Warrior VII, Syphon Filter 3*—just to name a few. And PS2 played them with better loading times and smoother graphics.

In other words, the PS1 helped save the PS2's bacon. Think it's a stretch of the imagination? Think again. Sheer hype made the system a top seller at launch, but hype only gets you so far when there's nothing to back it up—which is why I distinctly recall selling off my Nintendo 64 shortly after squeezing every last ounce of fun from *Super Mario 64* and looking ahead to a bleak future. PS2, on the other hand, had an instant library of five-star software.

The PS2 eventually got its killer apps at the end of 2001 with *Metal Gear Solid 2, Grand Theft Auto III*, and *Final Fantasy X*, but a year is a long time for gamers to wait for the goods. We're an impatient bunch. Fortunately, that $300 price tag was a lot less painful when it extended the life of all those 32-bit games we'd invested in.

Microsoft is bending over backward to enable backward compatibility in the Xbox 360. Revolution is going one better by allowing gamers to play every old Nintendo game. Even the DS has support for Game Boy Advance games...despite the fact that Nintendo swears the DS is totally different than the GBA. In other words, the competition has learned from Sony's golden equation. One plus one is two, but PS2 minus PS1 just might have been a big fat zero. «

HYPE WITH NOTHING TO BACK IT UP ONLY GETS YOU SO FAR.

YOU! SHALL NOT! PASS!
Did you know that EA Games recently received permission to develop titles based on the *Lord of the Rings* books? The previous license covered only the Peter Jackson films. All we have to say to EA is: Tom Bombadil. Fatty Lumpkin. Get on it.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
King of Fighters: Maximum Impact	SNK Playmore	●●●	87
The King of Route 66	Sega	●●●	67
King's Field: The Ancient City	Agetec	●●	55
Kingdom Hearts	**Square EA**	●●●●◖	**61**
Klonoa 2: Lunatea's Veil	Namco	●●●●◖	47
Knockout Kings 2001	EA Sports	●●●●	42
Knockout Kings 2002	EA Sports	●●●●	55
Kuon	Agetec	●●◖	87
Kya: Dark Lineage	Atari	●●◖	76
La Pucelle: Tactics	Mastiff	●●●●	81
Le Mans 24 Hours	Infogrames	●●◖	48
Legacy of Kain: Defiance	Eidos	●●◖	76
Legaia 2: Duel Saga	Fresh Games	●●●	63
The Legend of Alon D'ar	Ubisoft	●◖	54
Legends of Wrestling	Acclaim	●●◖	53
Legends of Wrestling II	Acclaim	●●●	65
Legion: The Legend of Excalibur	Midway	●●●	59
Lego Racers 2	Lego Media	●●◖	51
Lego Star Wars	Giant Int.	●●●●	92
Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	87
Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events	Activision	●●	89
Lethal Skies	Sammy	●●●	58
Lethal Skies II	Sammy	●●●◖	74
Looney Tunes: Back in Action	EA Games	●	76
The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring	Black Label	●●●◖	63
⚡The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**75**
The Lord of the Rings: The Third Age	EA Games	●●	88
The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers	**EA Games**	●●●●◖	**63**
Lowrider	Jaleco	●◖	77
Lupin the 3rd: Treasure of the Sorcerer King	Bandai	●●●◖	78
Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter	Vivendi Universal	●●	71
Mad Maestro!	Eidos/Fresh	●●●	56
Madagascar	Activision	●●●	96
Madden NFL 2001	EA Sports	●●●●◖	38
Madden NFL 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	48
⚡Madden NFL 2003	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**60**
⚡Madden NFL 2004	**EA Sports**	●●●●●	**72**
⚡Madden NFL 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	83
⚡Madden NFL 06	EA Sports	●●●●◖	96
Mafia	Gathering	●●●◖	79
Magic Pengel: The Quest for Color	Agetec	●●●●	69
⚡Major League Baseball 2K5	2K Games	●●●●	91
Makai Kingdom	NIS America	●●●◖	96
Malice	Mud Duck	●●◖	84
Manhunt	**Rockstar**	●●●◖	**76**
The Mark of Kri	Sony CEA	●●●	59
Marvel vs. Capcom 2	Capcom	●●●●	61
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2	Activision	●●●●	60
Max Payne	**Rockstar**	●●●●	**53**
Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne	Rockstar	●●●◖	77
Maximo: Ghosts to Glory	**Capcom**	●●●◖	**54**
Maximo vs. Army of Zin	Capcom	●●●●	77
McFarlane's Evil Prophecy	Konami	◖	84
MDK2 Armageddon	Interplay	●●●◖	45
Medal of Honor: European Assault	EA Games	●●●●	95
Medal of Honor: Frontline	**EA Games**	●●●●●	**58**
⚡Medal of Honor: Rising Sun	**EA Games**	●●●◖	**76**
Mega Man Anniversary Collection	Capcom	●●●◖	83
Mega Man X: Command Mission	Capcom	●●●◖	86
Mega Man X7	Capcom	●●●◖	74
Mega Man X8	Capcom	●●●	88
Men in Black II: Alien Escape	Infogrames	●●◖	60
Mercenaries	LucasArts	●●●●◖	89
Metal Arms: Glitch in the System	Vivendi Universal	●●●●	75
Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty	**Konami**	●●●●●	**51**
Metal Gear Solid 2: Substance	**Konami**	●●●●●	**67**
Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater	**Konami**	●●●●●	**88**
Metropolismania	Natsume	●●●	61
Midnight Club	**Rockstar**	●●●●	**39**
⚡Midnight Club II	**Rockstar**	●●●●●	**67**
⚡Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	Rockstar	●●●●	93
Midway Arcade Treasures	Midway	●●●◖	76
Midway Arcade Treasures 2	Midway	●●●●	87
Mike Tyson Heavyweight Boxing	Codemasters	●	58
Minority Report	Activision	●●◖	65
Mission: Impossible–Operation Surma	Atari	●●	77
Mister Mosquito	Eidos/Fresh	●●●◖	56
MLB 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	67
⚡MLB 2005	Sony CEA	●●●◖	80
⚡MLB 2006	Sony CEA	●●●◖	91
MLB SlugFest 20-03	Midway	●●●●	59
MLB SlugFest 20-04	Midway	●●●●	67
⚡MLB SlugFest: Loaded	Midway	●●●◖	83
Mobile Light Force 2	XS Games	●●●◖	69
Mobile Suit Gundam: Encounters in Space	Bandai	●	75
Mobile Suit Gundam: Federation vs. Zeon	Bandai	●●●◖	61
Mobile Suit Gundam: Gundam vs. Zeta Gundam	Bandai	●●●	96
Mobile Suit Gundam: Journey to Jaburo	Bandai	●	48
Mobile Suit Gundam: Zeonic Front	Bandai	●●●	54
Mojo!	Crave	●●◖	73
Monopoly Party	Infogrames	●●●	65
Monster 4x4: Masters of Metal	Ubisoft	●●◖	77
Monster Hunter	Capcom	●●●●	86
Monster Rancher 3	Tecmo	●●●●	50
Monster Rancher 4	Tecmo	●●●◖	75
Monsters, Inc.	Sony CEA	●●●◖	55
Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance	**Midway**	●●●●	**64**
⚡Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	●●●●	87
MotoGP	Namco	●●●●	39

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
MotoGP 2	Namco	●●●●◖	53
MotoGP 3	Namco	●●●●◖	67
Motor Mayhem	Infogrames	●●●	47
MTV Music Generator 2	Codemasters	●●●	46
MTV Music Generator 3: This Is the Remix	Codemasters	●●●◖	82
MTV's Celebrity Deathmatch	Gotham Games	●◖	76
⚡MTX: Mototrax	Activision	●●◖	80
The Mummy Returns	Universal	●◖	52
Musashi Samurai Legend	Square Enix	●●●	91
Music Maker	Magix	●●●●	69
MVP Baseball 2003	EA Sports	●●●◖	67
⚡MVP Baseball 2004	EA Sports	●●●●◖	80
⚡MVP Baseball 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	91
MX 2002 Featuring Ricky Carmichael	THQ	●●●●	47
MX Rider	Infogrames	●●●◖	52
MX Superfly Featuring Ricky Carmichael	THQ	●●●◖	59
⚡MX vs. ATV Unleashed	THQ	●●●●	91
⚡My Street	Sony CEA	●●●	67
Myst III: Exile	Ubisoft	●●●◖	63
Mystic Heroes	Koei	●●◖	64
MX Unleashed	**THQ**	**●●●**	**79**
Namco Museum	**Namco**	**●●●◖**	**53**
Nano Breaker	Konami	●●◖	90
NARC	Midway	◖	93
NASCAR 2001	EA Sports	●●◖	40
⚡NASCAR 2005: Chase for the Cup	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**85**
NASCAR Heat	Infogrames	●●●●	47
NASCAR Thunder 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	51
NASCAR Thunder 2003	**EA Sports**	**●●●●◖**	**62**
⚡NASCAR Thunder 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**73**
NASCAR: Dirt to Daytona	Infogrames	●●●◖	63
Naval Ops: Warship Gunner	Koei	●●●	71
NBA 2K2	**Sega Sports**	**●●●●●**	**53**
⚡NBA 2K3	**Sega Sports**	**●●●●●**	**63**
NBA Ballers	**Midway Sports**	**●●●●**	**80**
NBA Hoopz	Midway	●●●	44
NBA Jam 2004	Acclaim	●●◖	75
NBA Live 2001	EA Sports	●●●	42
NBA Live 2002	EA Sports	●●◖	51
⚡NBA Live 2003	EA Sports	●●●●	63
⚡NBA Live 2004	EA Sports	●●●●◖	75
⚡NBA Live 2005	EA Sports	●●●●	86
NBA ShootOut 2001	Sony CEA	●●◖	44
NBA ShootOut 2003	Sony CEA	●●●	63
⚡NBA ShootOut 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	75
NBA Starting Five	Konami	●●◖	63
NBA Street	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●●**	**47**
NBA Street Vol. 2	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●●**	**68**
⚡NBA Street V3	EA Sports Big	●●●●◖	90
⚡NCAA College Basketball 2K3	Sega Sports	●●●●	64
NCAA College Football 2K3	Sega Sports	●●◖	60
NCAA Final Four 2001	Sony CEA	●	41
NCAA Final Four 2002	Sony CEA	●◖	52
NCAA Final Four 2003	Sony CEA	●●◖	64
⚡NCAA Final Four 2004	Sony CEA	●●	76
NCAA Football 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	48
NCAA Football 2003	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**60**
⚡NCAA Football 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**71**
⚡NCAA Football 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	83
⚡NCAA Football 06	Konami	●●	95
NCAA GameBreaker 2001	Sony CEA	●◖	41
NCAA GameBreaker 2003	Sony CEA	●●	61
⚡NCAA GameBreaker 2004	Sony CEA	●●◖	73
NCAA March Madness 2002	EA Sports	●●●	53
NCAA March Madness 2003	EA Sports	●●●	64
⚡NCAA March Madness 2004	EA Sports	●●●●	76
⚡NCAA March Madness 2005	EA Sports	●●●◖	88
Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**62**
⚡Need for Speed Underground	**EA Games**	**●●●●◖**	**76**
⚡Need for Speed Underground 2	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**87**
Neo Contra	Konami	●●●◖	87
NFL 2K2	**Sega Sports**	**●●●◖**	**52**
⚡NFL 2K3	Sega Sports	●●●●◖	60
NFL Blitz 20-02	Midway	●●●●	55
NFL Blitz 20-03	Midway	●●●◖	60

DID YOU KNOW?

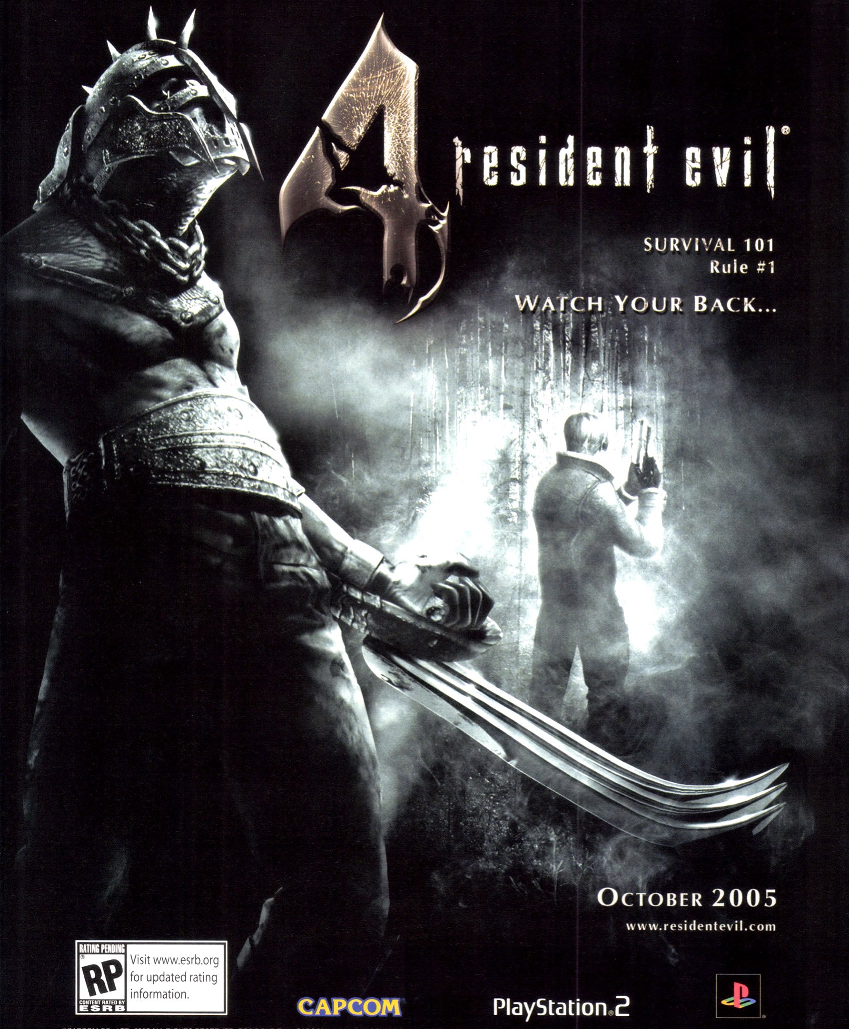
The Japanese title of Sony's offbeat RPG *Okage: Shadow King* was *The Devil and I*, also occasionally translated as *Me and Satan King*. You can probably see why it was changed.

PRIME NUMBERS

Fans of cult adventure game *Primal* have been clamoring for a sequel almost since the game came out. While nothing is definite yet, the developers claimed in a 2003 interview that a sequel is "a strong possibility."

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
⚡NFL Blitz Pro	Midway Sports	●●●	74
NFL GameDay 2001	Sony CEA	●	40
NFL GameDay 2002	Sony CEA	●◖	53
⚡NFL GameDay 2003	Sony CEA	●●◖	61
⚡NFL GameDay 2004	Sony CEA	●●●	73
NFL Quarterback Club 2001	Acclaim	●●◖	50
⚡NFL Street	**EA Sports Big**	**●●●●◖**	**78**
⚡NFL Street 2	EA Sports Big	●●●◖	89
NHL 2001	EA Sports	●●●●	38
NHL 2002	EA Sports	●●●●◖	50
NHL 2003	EA Sports	●●●◖	63
⚡NHL 2004	EA Sports	●●●●	73
⚡NHL 2005	EA Sports	●●●◖	85
⚡NHL 06	EA Sports	●●●	96
NHL 2K3	**Sega Sports**	**●●●●●**	**64**
NHL FaceOff 2001	Sony CEA	●●●◖	43
NHL FaceOff 2003	Sony CEA	●●	64
NHL Hitz 20-02	Midway	●●●●	51
NHL Hitz 20-03	Midway	●●●●◖	62
⚡NHL Hitz Pro	Midway	●●●●	73
Nick Toons: Movin'	THQ	●●●	88
Nightmare of Druaga	Namco	●●	87
Ninja Assault	Namco	●●◖	61
No One Lives Forever	Sierra	●●●◖	56
Obscure	DreamCatcher	●●	93
Okage: Shadow King	Sony CEA	●●●	51
Oni	Rockstar	●◖	43
Onimusha: Warlords	**Capcom**	**●●●●**	**43**
Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny	Capcom	●●●●	60
Onimusha 3: Demon Siege	Capcom	●●●●◖	81
Orphen: Scion of Sorcery	Activision	●●●	39
⚡Outlaw Golf 2	Global Star	●◖	88
Pac-Man Fever	Namco	●●	60
Pac-Man World 2	**Namco**	**●●●●◖**	**54**
PaRappa the Rapper 2	Sony CEA	●●●◖	53
Paris-Dakar Rally	Acclaim	●●	53
Phantom Brave	NIS America	●●●●◖	85
Pinball Hall of Fame	Crave	●◖	90
Pirates: The Legend of Black Kat	EA Games	●●●◖	55
Pitfall: The Lost Expedition	Activision	●●	80
Playboy: The Mansion	Arush Ent.	●●	91
The Polar Express	THQ	●●●	88
Pool Paradise	Ignition	●●●◖	83
Portal Runner	3DO	●●	50
Power Drome	Mud Duck	●	84
Power Rangers: Dino Thunder	THQ	●●	88
The Powerpuff Girls: Relish Rampage	Bam	●●	65
Predator: Concrete Jungle	Vivendi Universal	●●◖	94
Pride FC	THQ	●●●●	65
Primal	Sony CEA	●●●●	68
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●●**	**75**
Prince of Persia: Warrior Within	Ubisoft	●●●●	88
Pro Race Driver	Codemasters	●●●●◖	65
Project Eden	Eidos	●●●◖	52
⚡Project: Snowblind	Eidos	●●●●	91
Pryzm Chapter One: The Dark Unicorn	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	60
Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	●●●●◖	82
Psychonauts	Majesco	●●●●	95
P.T.O. IV	Koei	●●●	66
The Punisher	THQ	●●●◖	90
Q-Ball Billiards Master	Take-Two	●●●◖	40
Quake III: Revolution	EA Games	●●●●◖	44
R: Racing Evolution	Namco	●●●●	76
R-Type Final	Eidos/Fresh Games	●●●●	78
Rally Fusion: Race of Champions	Activision	●●●	64
Rapala Pro Fishing	Activision	●●◖	85
Ratchet & Clank	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**63**
Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**75**
⚡Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**87**
Rayman 2: Revolution	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●●**	**41**
Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	Ubisoft	●●●◖	67
Rayman Arena	Ubisoft	●●●◖	57
RC Revenge Pro	Acclaim	●●◖	41
Ready 2 Rumble Boxing Round 2	Midway	●●●●	40
Real Pool	Infogrames	●●●◖	40

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Red Card Soccer 20-03	Midway	●●●	57
Red Dead Revolver	Rockstar	●●●●	82
Red Faction	**THQ**	**●●●●●**	**46**
Red Faction II	THQ	●●●●	63
Red Ninja: End of Honor	Vivendi Universal	●●	92
Reel Fishing III	Natsume	●●●●	72
Reign of Fire	Bam	●●●◖	63
Resident Evil Code: Veronica X	**Capcom**	**●●●●◖**	**48**
Resident Evil: Dead Aim	Capcom	●●●◖	70
⚡Resident Evil Outbreak	Capcom	●●●◖	81
⚡Resident Evil Outbreak: File #2	Capcom	●◖	92
Return to Castle Wolfenstein: OR	Activision	●●●◖	71
Rez	Sega	●●●●◖	53
Ribbit King	Bandai	●●●	82
Ridge Racer V	Namco	●●●●◖	38
Riding Spirits	Bam	●●●◖	61
Ring of Red	Konami	●●●●	43
Rise of the Kasai	Sony CEA	●●●◖	92
Rise to Honor	**Sony CEA**	**●●●**	**78**
⚡Risk: Global Domination	Atari	●●●●	73
RLH: Run Like Hell	Interplay	●●●	62
Road Kill	Midway	●●●●	74
Road Trip	Conspiracy	●●●●	61
Robin Hood: Defender of the Crown	Capcom	●●◖	74
Robotech: Invasion	Global Star	●●●	86
Robots	Vivendi Universal	●	92
Rocky	Ubisoft	●●●●	64
Rocky Legends	Ubisoft	●●◖	87
Robot Alchemic Drive	Enix	●●●●	63
Robotech: Battlecry	TDK	●●●◖	62
Rogue Ops	Kemco	●●◖	75
Romance of the Three Kingdoms VII	Koei	●●◖	60
Romance of the Three Kingdoms VIII	Koei	●●●	73
Romance of the Three Kingdoms X	Koei	●●●◖	94
RPG Maker 2	Agetec	●●●◖	74
RTX Red Rock	LucasArts	●●	71
Rugby	EA Sports	●●●◖	48
Rugby 2004	EA Sports	●●●	73
Rugby 2005	EA Sports	●●◖	91
Rumble Racing	EA Games	●●●●◖	45
Rumble Roses	Konami	●●●	88
Rune: Viking Warlord	Take-Two	●●◖	48
Rygar: The Legendary Adventure	Tecmo	●●●●◖	64
Salt Lake 2002	Eidos	●●◖	55
Samurai Jack: The Shadow of Aku	Sega	●●●●	80
Samurai Warriors	Koei/EA	●●●●	81
Samurai Warriors: Xtreme Legends	Koei	●●●	88
Samurai Western	Atlus	●●●	94
Saturday Night Speedway	Atari	●●◖	81
Savage Skies	Bam	●●●	56
Scaler	Global Star	●●●●	88
Scooby-Doo! Mystery Mayhem	THQ	●●●	81
Scooby-Doo! Night of 100 Frights	**THQ**	**●●●**	**58**
The Scorpion King: Rise of the Akkadian	Universal	●●	62
SD Gundam Force: Showdown!	Bandai	●●●◖	88
Second Sight	Codemasters	●●●●	86
Secret Weapons Over Normandy	LucasArts	●●●●	75
Seek and Destroy	Conspiracy	●●●◖	66
Sega Bass Fishing Duel	Sega	●●●	62
Sega Classics Collection	Sega	●●	90
Sega Soccer Slam	Sega Sports	●●	62
Sega Sports Tennis	Sega Sports	●●●●◖	60
Sega Superstars	Sega	●●●●	88
⚡Serious Sam: Next Encounter	Global Star	●●●◖	81
Seven Samurai 20XX	Sammy	●●	80
Shadow Hearts	Midway	●●●●	52
Shadow Hearts: Covenant	Midway	●●●●	86
Shadow of Destiny	Konami	●●●◖	43
Shadow of Rome	Capcom	●●●●	89
Shadow Man: 2econd Coming	Acclaim	●●	57
Shaman King: Power of Spirit	Konami	●●◖	89
Shark Tale	Activision	●●◖	88
Shaun Palmer's Pro Snowboarder	Activision	●●◖	52
ShellShock: Nam '67	Eidos	●●	85
Shifters	3DO	●	58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10 ESSENTIAL RACERS

THE 10 GAMES RACING FANS SHOULD NOT BE WITHOUT

As we await the glorious return of our favorite racing series (in the form of *Burnout Revenge*, which you can play for yourself on this month's disc), our thoughts turn to other great racers of PlayStation history. If you haven't played these, your racing life is not complete.

ATV OFFROAD FURY / PS2

Big air, massive open areas, and awesome track design make *ATV Offroad Fury* an undisputed racing classic. A simple yet rock-solid control set and a repertoire of several dozen tricks are set to a rockin' soundtrack. But with the obvious exception of *Burnout*, no racing game matches *ATV's* ability to deliver a great crash. These aren't just your standard brush-yourself-off crashes—they're downright biblical, seemingly projecting you to the end of the world—and way past it—making for a fun ride even when you fail.

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Rainbow Studios

BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN / PS2

Without having reviewed *Burnout Revenge*, we have to stand by our Game of the Year for 2004 for this essential list. We say there's no better arcade racer on any system, and if you disagree, there's something wrong with you. The beauty and speed of this slick game irretrievably spoiled future racing games for us. Just try going back to *Gran Turismo* after taking a lap in *Burnout*'s F1 car; you'll feel like you're driving a golf cart. And with more races and race types than any three other racers, you just can't beat the replay value.

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** Criterion

GRAN TURISMO 4 / PS2

Some would call the *Gran Turismo* series the king of kings. Others might call it a snoozefest. But whatever your opinion, there's no denying that it represents the pinnacle of real-life car culture. What other racing series has actually inspired people to go out and buy a car based on how it performed in a game? There isn't one, and *Gran Turismo 4* continues the trend of racing excellence with an amazing selection of cars, the best tracks in the world (re-created down to the smallest bit of graffiti), and people! Yes, no longer are you in control of driverless phantom cars!

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Polyphony Digital

MIDNIGHT CLUB 3: DUB EDITION / PS2

Whereas *Burnout* and *Gran Turismo* are heavily in the arcade and simulation camps, respectively, *Midnight Club 3* manages to straddle the two. It has the insane speed and somewhat wacky driving mechanics of a *Burnout*-style game, but it has the customization and physics of a driving simulation. No other game even comes close to having the number of cool things you can do to your car here, and what makes it even cooler is that you genuinely feel like you have a unique ride when you take it online to race against other drivers.

Pub. Rockstar **Dev.** Rockstar San Diego

NEED FOR SPEED: HOT PURSUIT 2 / PS2

Speeding is fun. Speeding, being chased by cops, and outrunning them is even more fun. Which is why the *Hot Pursuit* games are the most memorable titles in the *Need for Speed* series. *Hot Pursuit 2* makes no apologies that it's an arcade racer, but it carries a depth that includes some 49 licensed vehicles on 15 tracks. Car handling is tight as a drum—which is important when half a dozen cops are on your tail and barricades, spike strips, and barrel-hurling helicopters await you down the road. Forget the law—you have a race to win.

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** Black Box

CTR: CRASH TEAM RACING / PS1

Yes, it's a cartoony mascot racer. Yes, it's utterly derivative of *Mario Kart*. Yes, it's on a 10-year-old system. But it's one of the finest-looking games on that system and is still one of the most entertaining party games available, thanks to its riotous four-player splitscreen modes. As with any cart racer, it's simple to pick up and play, but the elegant drift/jump/boost system adds a layer of complexity and strategy that rewards skilled play. We're hoping the forthcoming *Jak X* can top it, but we're not holding our breath.

Pub. Sony CEA **Dev.** Naughty Dog

MOTO RACER / PS1

We have yet to play a more elegant and accessible motorcycle racing game. Arriving at the dawn of the DualShock, *Moto Racer* controls like a dream, letting you hit ridiculous speeds with utter confidence in your bike's maneuverability. Although *Moto Racer 2* came out a year later and added a motocross mode and a track editor, in doing so it lost the original's simple accessibility. Either game will do right by you, but if you put a gun to our heads and forced us to choose one, we'd have to go with the original.

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** Delphine Software

RAGE RACER / PS1

If you need to know how track design can make or break a racing game, you needn't look any further than *Rage Racer*. To this day, it has some of the most dynamic track designs of any *Ridge Racer* game. Since the *Ridge Racer* series' awesome drifting mechanics are also a part of the package, *Rage Racer* instantly became one of the best racing games on the PS1. It's also one of the best-looking PS1 racing games. *Rage Racer* even has some customization—which, at the time, was one of the many features that fans of the *Ridge Racer* series were begging for.

Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco

SLED STORM / PS1

Do not confuse this PS1 gem with the inferior PS2 title of the same name. While the PS2 game feels like an attempt to add some snowmobile treads to *SSX*, the original game is a more serious racer with realistic mountain courses, branching and hidden pathways, a nice assortment of upgradeable snowmobiles, and controls like warm butter. Our biggest complaint is that the game is disappointingly easy to beat, but considering you should be able to find it for around 10 bucks these days, you should get your money's worth.

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** EA Canada

RIDGE RACER / PSP

All you need to know about *Ridge Racer* for the PSP is that it features a collection of tracks from every single *Ridge Racer* game ever made, including the excellent tracks from *Rage Racer*. That alone makes it one of the best racing games, but it also has some of its own cool features. Namco added a turbo-boost option that you can power up by utilizing drifting techniques. At first, this seems like a feature that has no real place in a game like *Ridge Racer*, but it fits in seamlessly, making a fun game even better.

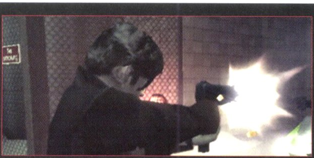
Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco

HONORABLE MENTION

You'll notice this list doesn't include some of the more specialized race genres—NASCAR, F1, and so on. That's because we wanted to focus on the widely accessible games rather than the niche markets. But if you think we left out a game that every race fan should play, by all means let us know.

READER REVIEWS

GUNS, DRUGS, AND BASKETBALL



MEDAL OF HONOR: EUROPEAN ASSAULT

WHAT YOU SAID

"*Medal of Honor: European Assault* is the exact war game the PS2 needed. It has outstanding gameplay features and large, detailed maps. The missions are mostly long and tough, which makes the game good. There is also a great multiplayer mode that's addictive. It has good graphics [that look] realistic. Although, if I must complain, there are some parts of the game in which you can get stuck, become very angry, and throw your controller across the room."

[●●●●●]

Nathan Young

WHAT WE SAID

"Ultimately, *European Assault* is another World War II shooter and falls back on many of the familiar formulas of the genre. But the nonlinear design, careful difficulty ramp, and outstanding presentation bring this one above the pack."

[●●●●◖]

NARC

WHAT YOU SAID

"I had high hopes for this game. The ability to take several different kinds of drugs sounded unique. However, Midway's new trend of taking classic games and revamping them (and by "revamping," I mean making them ultraviolent) isn't working. The slogan for the game is "Walk the line or cross it," but if you cross the line and get fired, you can't continue with the missions, so you have to walk the line. If I could give it a zero, I would."

[●●●●●]

MAD330Q@aol.com

WHAT WE SAID

"NARC just might be the ultimate antidrug message, as it basically shows us that drugs aren't cool, just stupid."

[●●●●●]

NBA STREET V3

WHAT YOU SAID

"*NBA Street V3* is probably the most pimpin' game ever. The controls are easy to handle. You can do wicked tricks to fool your opponent. You can create new ballers, and it has online play, which makes it even better."

[●●●●●]

Wayne Gupta

WHAT WE SAID

"Great single-player mode with plenty of game types, excellent customization features, [and a] fun dunk contest."

[●●●●◖]

Want to have your say about a recent game? Think you can do better than us? Send your review (and don't forget the score!) to opm@ziffdavis.com with the subject line of "READER REVIEW."

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Shin Megami Tensei: Digital Devil Saga	Atlus	●●●●	92
Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne	Atlus	●●●●◖	86
Shining Tears	Sega	●●●	90
Shinobi	Sega	●●●◖	63
Showdown: Legends of Wrestling	Acclaim	●◖	83
Shox	EA Sports Big	●●●◖	63
Shrek 2	**Activision**	●●●◖	**82**
Shrek Super Party	TDK Mediactive	●●◖	64
Siren	Sony CEA	●●●	81
Silent Hill 2	**Konami**	●●●●◖	**50**
Silent Hill 3	Konami	●●●●◖	71
Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	●●●●◖	85
Silent Line: Armored Core	Agetec	●●●◖	70
Silent Scope	Konami	●●●	39
Silent Scope 2	Konami	●●●◖	49
Silent Scope 3	Konami	●●●◖	62
Silpheed: The Lost Planet	Working Designs	●●●◖	40
The Simpsons: Hit & Run	**Vivendi Universal**	●●●●	**72**
The Simpsons: Road Rage	**EA Games**	●●●	**52**
The Simpsons Skateboarding	EA Games	●◖	64
The Sims	**EA Games**	●●●●	**65**
⚡The Sims: Bustin' Out	**EA Games**	●●●●◖	**76**
Sitting Ducks	Hip Interactive	●●●	88
Sky Gunner	Atlus	●●●◖	58
Sky Odyssey	Activision	●●●	40
Sled Storm	EA Sports Big	●●●◖	55
Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**62**
Sly 2: Band of Thieves	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**86**
Smash Cars	Metro3D	●●●◖	71
Smash Court Tennis: Pro Tournament	Namco	●●●◖	56
Smash Court Tennis: Pro Tournament 2	Namco	●●●●	82
Smuggler's Run	**Rockstar**	●●●●◖	**39**

SILENT, DEADLY

Want to see some candid snaps from the set of the *Silent Hill* movie? Point your browser at www.photobucket.com/albums/v299/theatmaweapon/silenthillmovie.

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Smuggler's Run 2: Hostile Territory	Rockstar	●●●●◖	52
Soccer America: International Cup	Hot-B	●●	48
Soccer Mania	EA/Lego	●●●◖	59
⚡SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**60**
⚡SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs	**Sony CEA**	●●●●●	**75**
Soldier of Fortune	Majesco	●●●	52
Sonic Heroes	Sega	●●	77
Sonic Mega Collection	Sega	●●●	88
Soul Calibur II	**Namco**	●●●●●	**72**
Soul Reaver 2	Eidos	●●●	52
Space Channel 5 Special Edition	Sega	●●●◖	75
Space Race	Infogrames	●●◖	59
Spawn Armageddon	Namco	●◖	76
Speed Kings	Acclaim	●●●●	70
Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy	THQ	●●●◖	75
Spider-Man	**Activision**	●●●●◖	**57**
Spider-Man 2	Activision	●●●◖	84
Splashdown	Infogrames	●●●●	52
Splashdown: Rides Gone Wild	**THQ**	●●●●●	**72**
SpongeBob SquarePants: Battle for Bikini Bottom	**THQ**	●●●●◖	**75**
SpongeBob SquarePants: The Movie	THQ	●●●●◖	87
Spy Fiction	Sammy	●●	85
SpyHunter	**Midway**	●●●●◖	**50**
SpyHunter 2	Midway	●●●	76
Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly	**Vivendi Universal**	●●●	**64**
Spyro: A Hero's Tail	Vivendi Universal	●●	87
⚡SRS: Street Racing Syndicate	Namco	●●●	64
SSX	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●●	**38**
SSX Tricky	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●●	**52**
⚡SSX 3	**EA Sports Big**	●●●●●	**74**
Star Ocean: Till the End of Time	Square Enix	●●●●	84
Star Trek: Shattered Universe	TDK	●●	75

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force	Majesco	●●◖	53
Star Wars: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	●●●	65
Star Wars Battlefront	LucasArts	●●●●◖	86
Star Wars Bounty Hunter	**LucasArts**	●●●	**64**
Star Wars: Episode III ROTS	LucasArts	●●●	94
Star Wars Jedi Starfighter	LucasArts	●●●◖	56
Star Wars Racer Revenge	LucasArts	●●●●◖	55
Star Wars Starfighter	**LucasArts**	●●●●◖	**43**
Star Wars Super Bombad Racing	LucasArts	●●	45
Starsky & Hutch	Gotham Games	●●	74
State of Emergency	**Rockstar**	●●●	**55**
Stella Deus: The Gate of Eternity	Atlus	●●●●	93
Stitch: Experiment 626	Sony CEA	●●◖	59
Stolen	Hip Interactive	●●●	94
Street Fighter Anniversary Collection	Capcom	●●●●	84
Street Fighter EX 3	Capcom	●●●◖	39
Street Hoops	**Activision**	●●●◖	**60**
Stretch Panic	Conspiracy	●●●◖	47
Strike Force Bowling	Crave	●◖	82
Stuntman	**Infogrames/Atari**	●●●	**59**
Sub Rebellion	Metro3D	●●●●	62
The Suffering	Midway	●●●	80
Suikoden III	Konami	●●●	63
Suikoden IV	Konami	●●●	89
Summer Heat Beach Volleyball	Acclaim	●●●◖	72
Summoner	THQ	●●●	39
Summoner 2	THQ	●●●◖	62
Sunny Garcia Surfing	Ubisoft	●●●◖	51
Super Bust-A-Move	Acclaim	●●●	41
Super Bust-A-Move 2	Ubisoft	●●●◖	63
Super Monkey Ball Deluxe	Sega	●●●	92
Super Trucks Racing	XS Games	●◖	76

GAME	PUBLISHER	SCORE	ISSUE
Supercar Street Challenge	Activision	●●◖	52
Superman: Shadow of Apokolips	Atari	●●●◖	63
Surfing H30	Rockstar	●●	40
SWAT: Global Strike Team	Sierra	●●●	74
Swing Away Golf	EA Games	●●●	38
⚡Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain	Sony CEA	●●●	81
Taiko: Drum Master	Namco	●●●●	87
Tak and the Power of Juju	**THQ**	**●●●◖**	**75**
Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams	THQ	●●●◖	88
Tarzan: Untamed	Ubisoft	●●●◖	52
Taz: Wanted	Infogrames	●●●◖	60
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Konami	●●◖	75
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	●	86
Tekken 4	**Namco**	**●●●◖**	**61**
Tekken 5	Namco	●●●●	92
Tekken Tag Tournament	**Namco**	**●●●●◖**	**39**
Technic Beat	Mastiff	●●●	89
Tenchu: Fatal Shadows	Sega	●●	90
Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	Activision	●●●	67
The Terminator: Dawn of Fate	Atari	●●◖	63
Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines	Atari	●◖	77
Terminator 3: The Redemption	Atari	●●●◖	86
Test Drive	**Infogrames**	**●●●◖**	**58**
Test Drive Off-Road: Wide Open	Infogrames	●●●	48
Test Drive: Eve of Destruction	Atari	●●●●	85
Tetris Worlds	THQ	●●	57
Theme Park Roller Coaster	EA Games	●●●●	41
The Thing	Universal	●●●	62
Thunderstrike: Operation Phoenix	Eidos	●◖	52
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2001	EA Sports	●●●	44
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2002	EA Sports	●●●●	55
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2003	EA Sports	●●●●◖	63
⚡Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	**EA Sports**	**●●●●●**	**73**
⚡Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005	EA Sports	●●●●◖	86
Time Crisis 2	Namco	●●●●	49
Time Crisis 3	Namco	●●●●◖	74
Time Crisis: Crisis Zone	Namco	●●●◖	86
TimeSplitters	**Eidos**	**●●●●●**	**39**
TimeSplitters 2	**Eidos**	**●●●●●**	**63**
⚡TimeSplitters: Future Perfect	**EA Games**	**●●●●●**	**91**
TOCA Race Driver 2	Codemasters	●●●●	86
Tokyo Xtreme Racer 3	Crave	●●	76
Tokyo Xtreme Racer Zero	Crave	●●◖	45
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	**Ubisoft**	**●●●◖**	**65**
⚡Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm	Ubisoft	●●●◖	78
⚡Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3	Ubisoft	●●●●	80
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●◖**	**68**
⚡Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Chaos Theory	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●●**	**92**
⚡Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow	**Ubisoft**	**●●●●●**	**82**
Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness	**Eidos**	**●●**	**72**
⚡Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3	**Activision**	**●●●●●**	**51**
⚡Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4	**Activision**	**●●●●●**	**63**
⚡Tony Hawk's Underground	**Activision**	**●●●●●**	**76**
⚡Tony Hawk's Underground 2	Activision	●●●●◖	87
Top Angler	Xicat	●●●◖	57
Top Gear Dare Devil	Kemco	●●●◖	41
Top Gun: Combat Zones	Titus	●●●	50
Total Immersion Racing	Empire	●	66
Transformers	Atari	●●●◖	81
Transworld Surf	Infogrames	●●●◖	57
⚡Tribes: Aerial Assault	Sierra	●●●◖	62
Triple Play 2002	EA Sports	●●	55
Triple Play Baseball	EA Sports	●●	45
⚡Trivial Pursuit: Unhinged	Atari	●●	81
True Crime: Streets of L.A.	**Activision**	**●●**	**76**
Tsugunai: Atonement	Atlus	●●●	53
Turok: Evolution	Acclaim	●◖	62
Twisted Metal: Black	**Sony CEA**	**●●●●●**	**47**
⚡Twisted Metal: Black Online	Sony CEA	●●●●	61
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger	**EA Games**	**●●●**	**62**
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UFC Sudden Impact	Crave	●●●◖	82
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The Urbz: Sims in the City	EA Games	●●●◖	88
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Warriors of Might and Magic	3DO	●●◖	44
Wave Rally	Eidos	●◖	53
Way of the Samurai	Bam	●●●◖	59
Way of the Samurai 2	Capcom	●●●	82
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Wreckless: The Yakuza Missions	Activision	●●	63
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WWE Crush Hour	THQ	●●◖	68
WWE SmackDown! Here Comes the Pain	**THQ**	**●●●◖**	**76**
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X Squad	EA Games	●●●◖	38
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Zapper	Infogrames	●●◖	64
ZOE: Zone of the Enders	Konami	●●●●◖	44
Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner	Konami	●●●●◖	68

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Issue 98
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REWIND

OPM THROUGH THE YEARS

THE SAGA CONTINUES

OPM is just three issues away from No. 100. Continuing with the theme of the last few months, we're taking a look at Issues #56 through #66. We're getting closer; there are games in this batch we're still playing today, lots of familiar faces and franchises, and plenty of great titles. These were some of the PS2's finest moments.

ISSUE #56: MAY 2002

Cover story: *Spider-Man*
Reviewed: *Army Men RTS* (4/5), *Herdy Gerdy* (3/5), *Mr. Mosquito* (3.5/5)
Previewed: *Kingdom Hearts, SOCOM*
Snarkiest quote: "[*World Destruction League: Thunder Tanks*] was like watching a stop-motion animation about tanks made by someone who didn't know anything about tanks, or stop-motion animation."

ISSUE #57: JUNE 2002

Cover story: *Star Wars Bounty Hunter*
Reviewed: *Spider-Man* (4.5/5), *Blood Omen 2* (3.5/5), *Dropship* (4/5)
Previewed: *Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness, The Mark of Kri, Final Fantasy XI*
What ever happened to... All those videogame movies we claimed were coming out, like: *Crazy Taxi, Dead or Alive, Duke Nukem, Max Payne, Soul Calibur, Tekken*...?

ISSUE #58: JULY 2002

Cover story: *EverQuest* and the PS2 Online
Reviewed: *Medal of Honor: Frontline* (5/5), *Sky Gunner* (3.5/5), *Test Drive* (3.5/5)
Previewed: *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4, Rygar, Ratchet & Clank, Shinobi*
Most unreasonably optimistic quote: "Sometime soon...you will be able to use your PS2 to access broadband content like streaming audio and video on demand."

ISSUE #59: AUGUST 2002

Cover story: *Sly Cooper*
Reviewed: *Stuntman* (3/5), *The Mark of Kri* (3/5), *Way of the Samurai* (3.5/5)
Previewed: *Silent Hill 3, XIII, Dark Cloud 2, Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2*
Most quickly regretted quote: "Everything looks good when it's cel-shaded." —Sam Kennedy, harbinger of the Great Cel-Shading Overdose of 2003

ISSUE #60: SEPTEMBER 2002

Cover story: *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs*
Reviewed: *SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs* (5/5), *Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny* (4/5)
Previewed: *Gungrave, Malice, TimeSplitters 2, .hack//INFECTION, True Crime*
Best interview question, ever: "What fools do you currently pity?" Asked of Mr. T in our interview about *Rocky*. Best response: "It's a good thing to be pitied by Mr. T."

ISSUE #61: OCTOBER 2002

Cover story: *Kingdom Hearts*
Reviewed: *Kingdom Hearts* (4.5/5), *Tekken 4* (3/5), *Dynasty Tactics* (4.5/5)
Previewed: *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City, Conflict: Desert Storm, BloodRayne*
Biggest understatement: "I gotta stop hitting my head." —Pro BMX rider Mat Hoffman, while being interviewed by pro skater Tony Hawk

ISSUE #62: NOVEMBER 2002

Cover story: *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*
Reviewed: *Sly Cooper* (5/5), *Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2* (5/5), *The Thing* (3/5)
Previewed: *Devil May Cry 2, The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers, Burnout 2*
Most embarrassing moment: Responding to a publicity-stunt contest hosted by Acclaim U.K., five people legally changed their names to Turok for about $800.

ISSUE #63: DECEMBER 2002

Cover story: *Shinobi*
Reviewed: *GTA: Vice City* (5/5), *Shinobi* (3.5/5), *Ratchet & Clank* (5/5), *TimeSplitters 2* (5/5), *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4* (5/5)
Previewed: *StarCraft: Ghost, Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner*
Understatement of the month: "*Final Fantasy XII* might be pushed back, possibly until 2004." Yeah, make that 2006.

ISSUE #64: JANUARY 2003

Cover story: *War of the Monsters*
Reviewed: *Star Wars Bounty Hunter* (3/5), *Rygar: The Legendary Adventure* (4.5/5)
Previewed: *EverQuest Online Adventures, Dragon Ball Z: Budokai, Dead to Rights*
Most unreasonably optimistic quote: "More time working on *Tomb Raider [Angel of Darkness]* means we'll get it absolutely right." —Rob Dyer, president of Eidos

ISSUE #65: FEBRUARY 2003

Cover story: *The Getaway*
Reviewed: *.hack//INFECTION* (3.5/5), *BMX XXX* (1.5/5), *The Sims* (4/5)
Previewed: *Final Fantasy X-2, Enter the Matrix, Splinter Cell, Xenosaga Ep. I*
Most prescient quote: "If [eventual *God of War* developer Incog] can continue its string of hits, then Sony made a very wise decision when it bought this team."

ISSUE #66: MARCH 2003

Cover story: *Def Jam Vendetta*
Reviewed: *Xenosaga Ep. I* (4/5), *EverQuest Online Adventures* (2.5/5), *Devil May Cry 2* (3/5), *Dark Cloud 2* (5/5), *The Getaway* (4/5)
Previewed: *DRIV3R, Amplitude, Rayman 3*
Whack, indeed: "They went with a gimmick and tried to rush a game and put our names on it, and it was whack." —Method Man, on *Wu-Tang: Shaolin Style*

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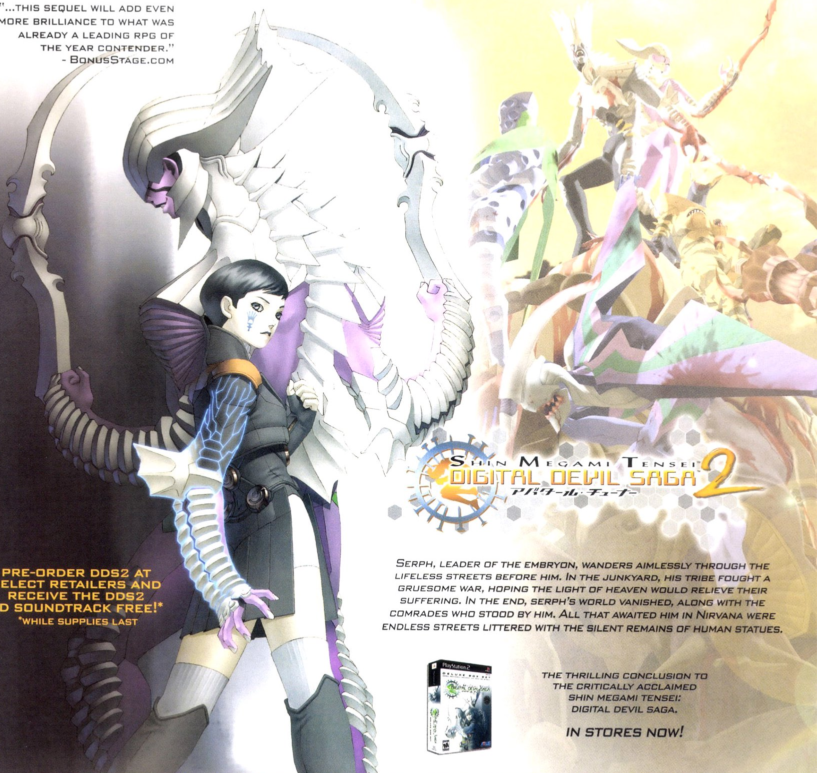

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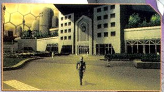

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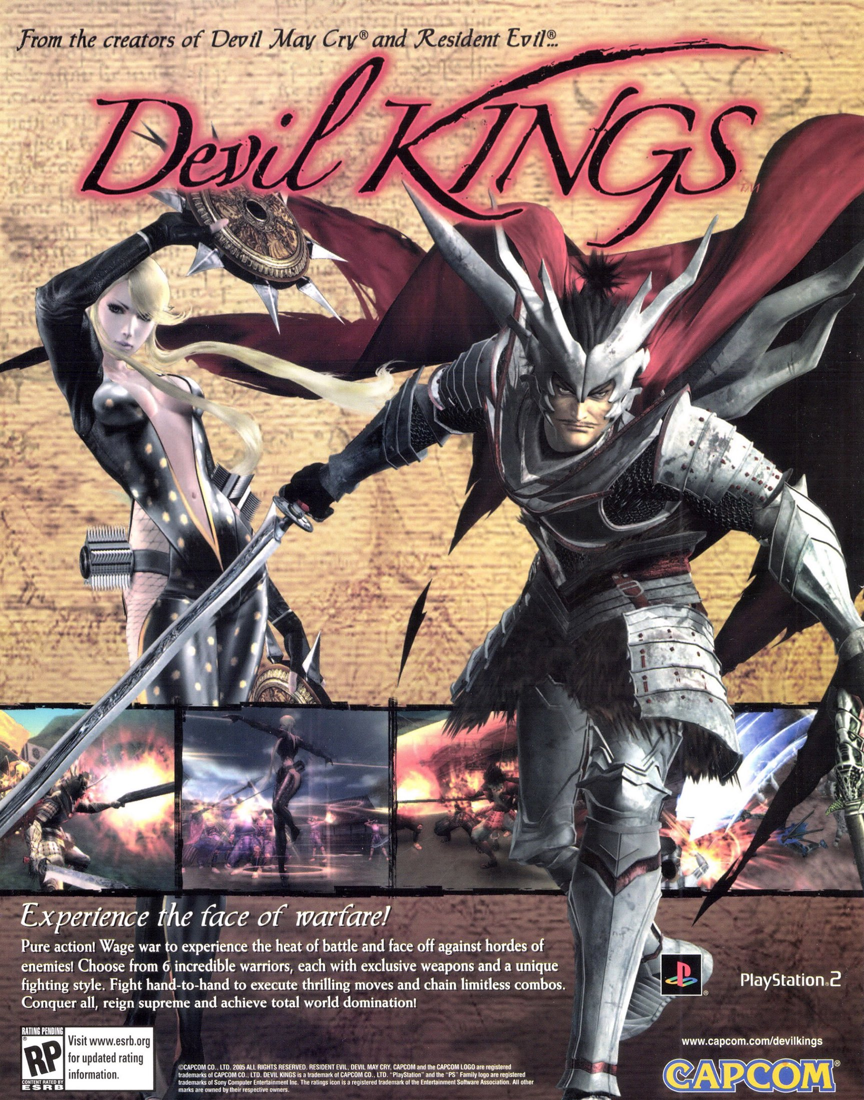
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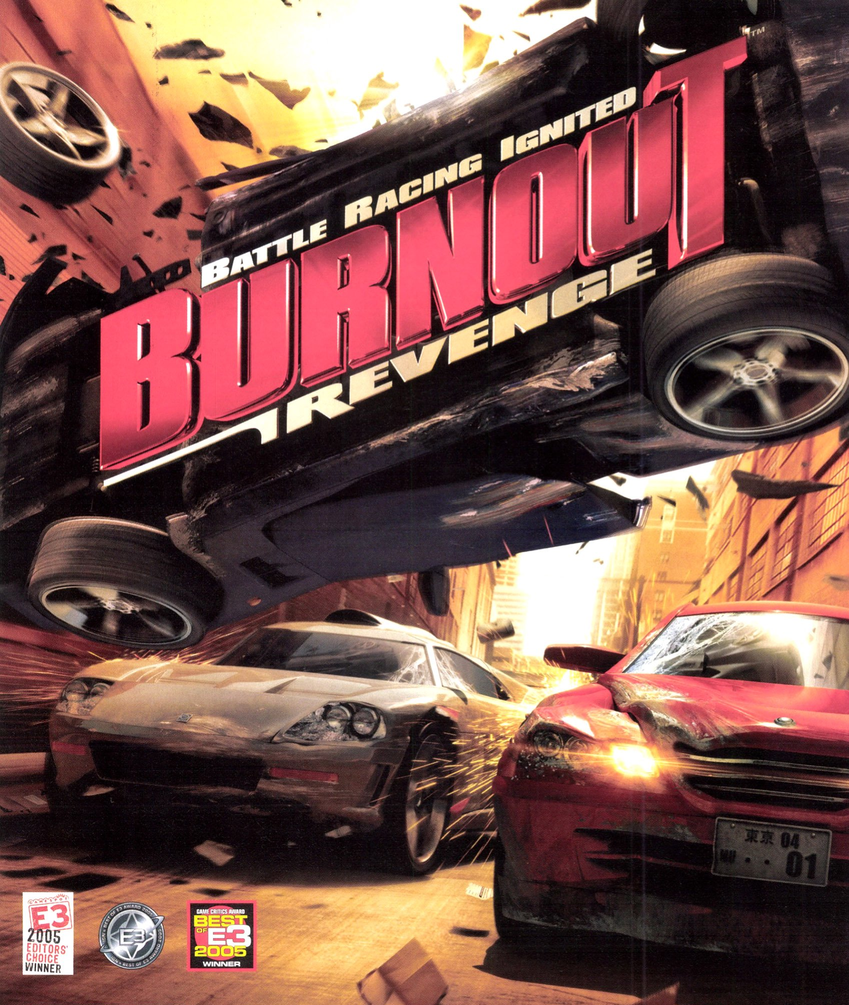
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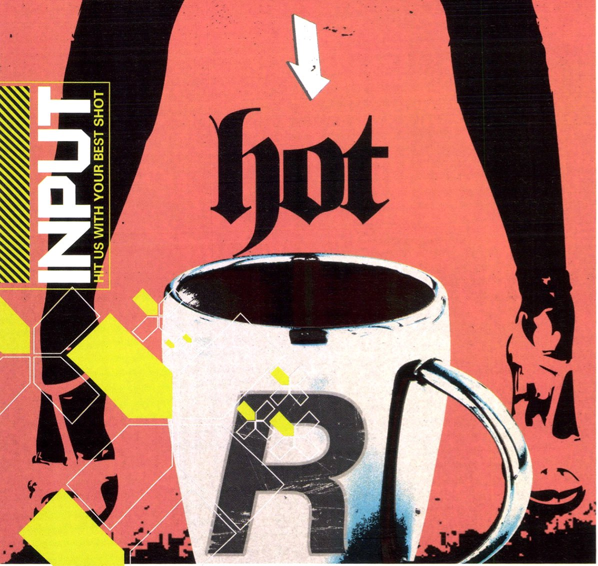

LETTER OF THE MONTH

I disagree with the rerating of *GTA: San Andreas* simply for the reasoning behind it. The game was deemed offensive because of content that couldn't be easily accessed by the end user. But what about the violence, profanity, and sexuality that were already present?

In the first 15 minutes of play, the main character assists in an armed robbery, beats someone to death with a baseball bat, and participates in a drive-by shooting. So why is it that the focus of this campaign against *San Andreas* was centered around content that the vast majority of players have never seen and probably never will?

It seems like quite a coincidence that *San Andreas* is part of a top-selling game franchise. Anyone choosing to go after this well-recognized and popular franchise would be guaranteed a lot of press. What I find most interesting is that games that contain more explicit content have been overlooked—perhaps because they didn't sell nearly as well?

If these politicians and activists truly care about regulating the content of videogames on the market, and not just about making waves and snagging headlines, then perhaps they need to open their eyes a bit and rethink their strategies.

Brent Hankins
Indianapolis, IN

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PSPRICEY

Want to know why the PSP isn't selling as well as expected? It is not because of limited software. The unit is still young and everyone knows that there will eventually be plenty of quality titles. The real reason PSPs aren't flying off shelves is because they are too freakin' expensive! For months, the buzz was that it would debut at around the $150 mark. At that price, I would have bought one the day they came out. But shortly before the release, the price jumped to $250! Now, I've been an avid gamer since the Atari 2600 and I actually owned the abysmal *E.T.* That puts me on the upper end of the prime 18-to-35-year-old target demographic. That also puts me squarely in wife/mortgage territory. That means I have money to singe—not burn. One of the advantages of maturity is patience. I don't rush out to plunk down $50 for brand-new games anymore. I bide my time for games to become more reasonably priced, and I will for the PSP, too. Thanks, Sony, but for now, no thanks. I can wait.

James Ford
via e-mail

Since the launch of the PSP, all the gaming magazines I read and websites I frequent haven't seemed to think price is a barrier for

GAMERS ARE TALKING ABOUT

STRAIGHT FROM THE OPM MESSAGE BOARDS

HOW DO YOU TAKE IT?

The brouhaha over the Hot Coffee minigame in *San Andreas* had message boards the world over buzzing. *OPM*'s readers proved they like their coffee like they like their games: contentious!

Edgerunner tried to head off the more extreme viewpoints by saying, "Just because you can modify a semiautomatic into a fully automatic, it doesn't make the company that made the original gun liable for the owner making it into an illegal weapon. In that regard, I think Rockstar is getting the short end of the stick. However, I still find it stupid beyond belief that they left the code in there, especially for the PC version, which is known for [its modding community]."

AuroraBlade agreed, saying, "I think this whole AO controversy is silly. The ESRB is faulty to begin with, but come on. Anyone under 17 shouldn't be playing *San Andreas* in the first place. This is all a terrible example of the media blowing things out of proportion."

"The way I see it," said **black_13**, "Rockstar put it in there on purpose to get even more publicity. Heck, it was even found at the perfect time: when the game has already been released on Xbox, PS2, and PC, having sold 15 million copies so far. They are just going to repackage it and sell even more copies. Controversy seems to be the new type of marketing."

Meanwhile, **milo900** pointed out, "*God of War* had some nakedness and sex in it. And it was more realistic. [But it got an] M rating. No controversy. Anyway, people will buy Rockstar's s*** more now."

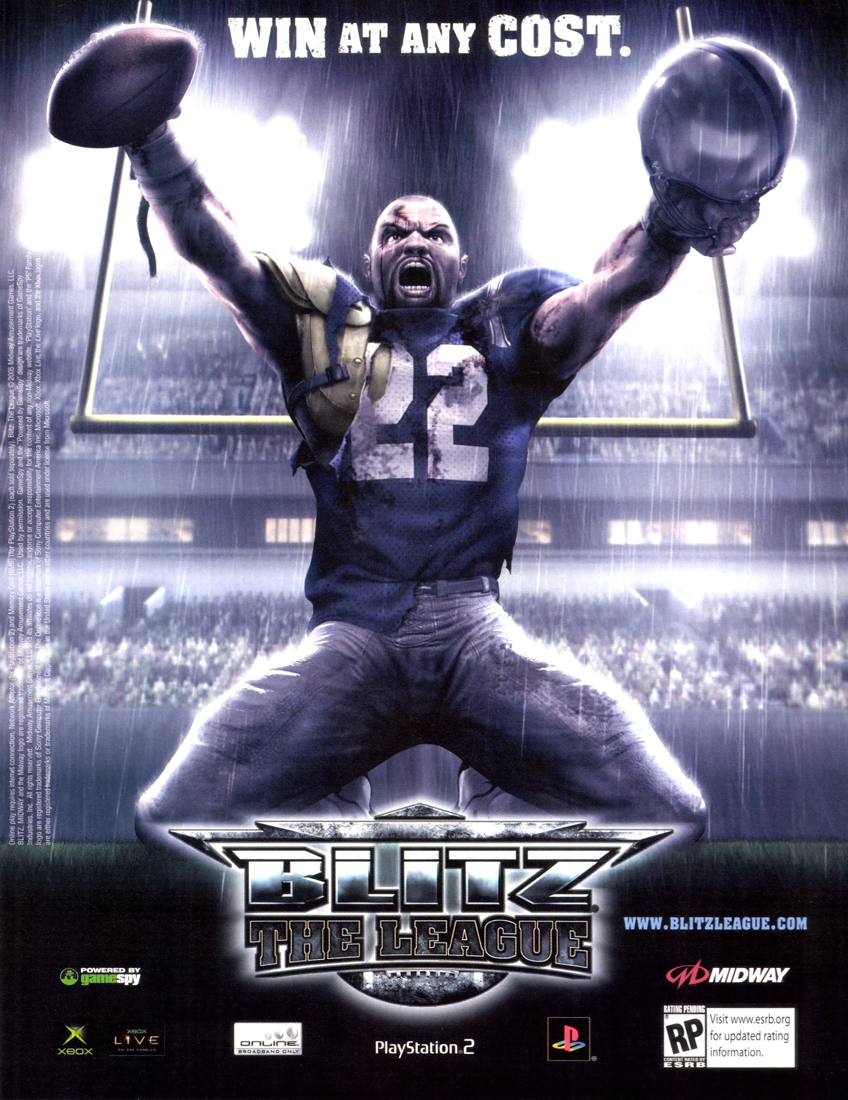
NO PSP LOVE

Tired of seeing only UMD movies coming out on PSP? So are these folks.

"Dear Sony," said **jedi_dad**, "right now, UMD movies outnumber games 2 to 1. It's clear to me that you feel the PSP is designed more to watch movies than to play games."

PSPMagnet leapt to his namesake's defense: "Would you rather have a bunch of half-assed games or would you like to wait and get games that have that final polish that makes a good game?"

"What you pointed out is why I waited so long before picking up a system," replied **magicthighs**. "Too much hype and empty promises."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consumers. But it's $249 for the PSP, $29.99 to $39.99 for one game, and $19.99 to $29.99 for UMD movies—most of which have been out for some time and are cheaper on DVD!

I am a gamer and a father of four. I can't afford to buy myself one of these things, let alone one for each kid. The Game Boy Advance is so successful because of its lower price tag and huge library. I'm aware that the PSP's target audience isn't necessarily the younger crowd and that the technology is way better, but speaking as a parent, the kids all want one and you can't buy one handheld gaming system for them to share and not see bloodshed! Personally, I would love to have one but I can't justify spending $250-plus on a handheld system when the Xbox 360 and PS3 will be available soon. Dwindling enthusiasm or a slow sales period? Maybe, but I think the obvious problem is the price.

Steve Hess
via e-mail

We're curious if sales after the inevitable price drop will support this hypothesis. Until then, your kids don't really need to eat *that* much, do they?

BARGAINS TOO COSTLY?

In regard to Mark Buckingham's e-mail titled "Bargain Hunter" printed in Issue #96, I would like to say that if everyone waited until a videogame cost only $20 to buy it, there would be no videogames.

Games these days have very large production costs. With each new generation of hardware come new possibilities for what kind of games developers can make, and with new possibilities comes much more work, and of course more work means larger production costs. If videogame companies don't make a profit, it's obvious that they cannot continue to make the games that we enjoy playing. Just realize that by paying full price you are helping perpetuate the videogame industry and ensuring that sequels to your favorite games can be made.

Lee Williams
via e-mail

That's a very noble sentiment, but don't forget that, even at a Greatest Hits price, games aren't exactly being sold at a loss (systems are, but that's a different topic).

MATURE VS. NURTURE

I work at GameStop and I would just like to say PARENTS DRIVE ME CRAZY!! Before selling a Mature game to a minor, we must ask the parent if it's OK. We explain the content of the game, and half the time the parents aren't even listening. We get kids all the time who whine and complain until their parents buy it for them. If I was a parent, I would not let my 7-year-old play *San Andreas*, but it happens every day! Parents will buy anything to keep their kids happy. What really gets me is when parents and politicians start to bitch that the younger generation is getting more violent and blaming it on *GTA*. Maybe if parents would actually pay attention to what they are buying, all this finger pointing would turn back on them.

Angela Seaton
via e-mail

Yeah, when we were kids, we begged and pleaded for that copy of *Pitfall!*, but all we got was stupid *E.T.* You see, Mom? You see what happens? They buried that game *in the desert*. No, it's too late, Mom. Just forget it.

THE BIG ONE

I'm sorry, everyone, but I have to rant about something that has been bothering me for a long time: World War II games—but not the games, the people who never stop complaining about them. If YOU don't buy the game, the developers won't make the games. The same people who complain about them go out and buy the next one. All the developers see is that people are buying their games, so what do they do? They make another one.

Ben Shaeffer
via e-mail

Do you think it's possible the people complaining about the games are different from the people buying the games? Maybe? «

SURVEY TIME!

Tell us what you think of your favorite PlayStation mag in the 2005 *Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine* Editorial Study. It'll only take a few minutes, and upon completion you'll be eligible to win a $300 American Express Check, redeemable practically anywhere. Just go to gamersvoice.1UP.com and survey away.

CORRECTION

None that we're aware of. So please stop writing to us about that picture of Cloud. We know it was art from *Kingdom Hearts*; it just looked better than the art from *FFVII*.

ASK US ANYTHING
AND WE'LL ANSWER

GULLIBLE ISN'T IN THE DICTIONARY

Q I heard a rumor from my friend that if you unlock the "Hot Coffee" hack in *GTA: San Andreas*, that there is a way for Sony to track your ISP and then ban you from all your online playing. Can you please clear this situation up for me and everybody in the gaming world? That would be great.

SOCOMPHREAK
vie e-mail

A That very well may be the most ridiculous thing we've ever heard.

BY THE WAY, AERIS DIES

Q In Tetsuya Nomura's bio [Issue #96], you referred to Cloud Strife and Aeris Gainsborough [of *Final Fantasy VII*] as minor characters! MINOR CHARACTERS! They're the biggest characters in the game, people! What is wrong with you?

Bahamut the Magnificent
via e-mail

A Guess we're just too fond of sarcasm, and too trusting that our thoughtful, intelligent readers will pick up on it.

NO COFFEE FOR YOU

Q I was wondering if you guys and gals could include a playable demo of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* on a future demo disc. Thanks.

Name withheld
via e-mail

A Nope!

CREEPY

Q I think Zoe Flower is a very attractive woman, and her article on cake was extremely sexy. Could I have her number please? I would love to talk to her about games and maybe more.

Nader Nekvasil
via e-mail

A Eww, no. Besides, she's married. But more importantly: eww.

BLOG OF THE MONTH

"For years I have been saying that eventually, in all their arrogance, Rockstar would do something so incredibly stupid that it would possibly change the industry forever. I am so incredibly disappointed with the ESRB for reversing their rating decision and changing *GTA: San Andreas* from a Mature rating to an Adults-Only rating. It is my opinion that the ESRB did their job when originally rating this title and they have nothing to be ashamed of.

"Does *San Andreas* deserve an Adults-Only rating? While I believe that only adults should play the game, if the retailers and parents would do their jobs, a Mature rating is more than enough. You also have to consider that the difference between a Mature rating and an Adults-Only rating is only a one-year difference. Negligible at best.

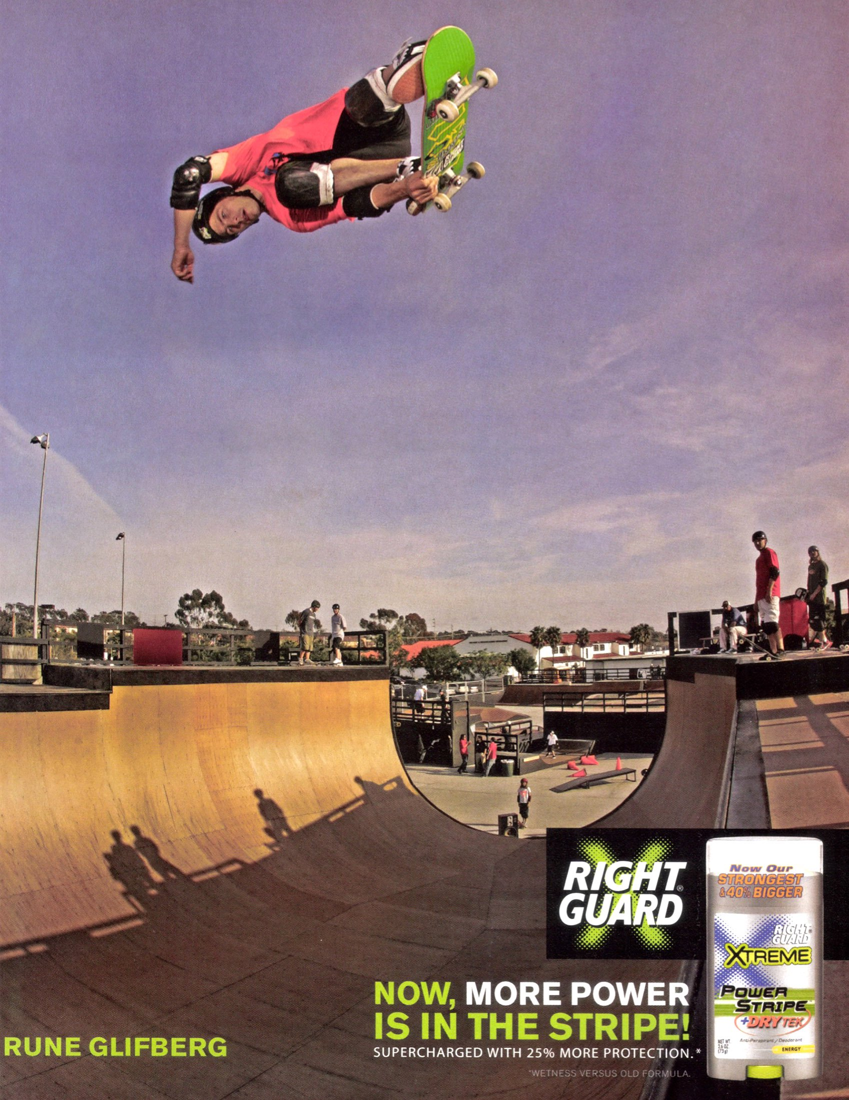
"The ESRB reversing their decision on *GTA* strikes a major victory for antigaming activists and politicians from both sides of our political fence."

Jared Rea
sl1p.1UP.com

CLUB OF THE MONTH

"Come talk about how much you love *Ico*."

The *Ico* Fan Club
the-ico-club.1UP.com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POWER STRIPE
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NET WT 2.6 OZ (73 g)
ENERGY

HYPE

PREVIEWS AND NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF PLAYSTATION

36›

RESIDENT EVIL 4

GET READY FOR THE BEST ZOMBIE GAME OF 2005

28 **CALENDAR**
The month for you and your PS2.

46 **PS3 WATCH**
The annual PlayStation meeting brought us a look at several more next-gen games.

50 **BLACK**
Welcome to the urban jungle—we hope you brought plenty of ammo.

56 **SIMPLY MARVEL-OUS**
How a comic book publisher is taking over gaming.

70 **STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II**
And then a hero comes along....

74 **DIRGE OF CERBERUS: FINAL FANTASY VII**
Hands-on time with the next chapter of the Compilation.

80 **J-TOWN**
One word: porn.

SCALDING HOT COFFEE

GRAND THEFT AUTO COMES UNDER FIRE AGAIN, BUT NOT FOR VIOLENCE

As if provoking antiviolence crusades against videogames weren't enough, *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* has carved yet another foothold for politicians and ambulance chasers to use in their mounting campaign to regulate videogames or profit from their alleged effects on children. It's dubbed the Hot Coffee mod, and it has single-handedly sparked an entirely new set of debates amongst politicians, lawyers, and parents disgusted with the notion that a videogame (one intended for people over the age of 17) would have such strong sexual content.

When the mod was first discovered in the PC version of *San Andreas*, all fingers immediately pointed at Rockstar, which tried to dodge the situation by claiming that hackers had used source code in the game to construct the scenes in question. These scenes featured the game's lead character, CJ, entering a girlfriend's house after she asks if he would like to come inside for some coffee. In the unmodified version of the game, the camera merely sticks to a shot outside the house, implying sexual activity. The Hot Coffee version of this scene actually shows CJ and the girlfriend participating in a few mildly explicit sexual acts.

However, the discovery of the same modification in the PS2 version of the game proved that the hackers in question did not build the scenes themselves. Unlike PC games, PS2 games' source code can't be altered. Rockstar finally admitted that the scene had originally been part of the game, but when the company decided the content was inappropriate, it broke the code to prevent the scene from being accessible to gamers who popped the disc in and played the game normally.

The Entertainment Software Ratings Board quickly sprung into action and said that it would revoke the M rating from *San Andreas* if Rockstar didn't take action. "The minigame that was unlocked in the Hot Coffee mod warranted an AO rating. Our raters, who were all independent, rated it AO, and we rated the existing content from the original version as M, and that's why we revoked the rating," says Patricia Vance, president of the ESRB. "We gave Rockstar the option [to keep it as AO] or to exchange preexisting inventory [with versions that didn't have the mod]."

Interestingly, Rockstar does not have to comply with such a request. It can choose to receive a rating from the ESRB or not, but there are consequences for not having a rating at all. "[Most] retailers have a policy not to carry product in stores that isn't rated by the ESRB," says Vance.

What is also interesting is that compliance with enforcing the ratings is voluntary as well. While the ESRB provides age recommendations for games, there is no law that compels retailers to follow those ratings. As with the movie ratings system established by the Motion Picture Association of America, there is no legal responsibility to rate the product or enforce the rating.

However, that did not keep lawmakers from running for the nearest soapbox. One of the most vocal was Senator Hillary Clinton, who said, "The disturbing material in *Grand Theft Auto* and other games like it is stealing the innocence of our children, and it's making the difficult job of being a parent even harder. I believe that the ability of our children to access pornographic and outrageously violent material [in] videogames rated for adults is spiraling out of control." Senator Clinton also requested that the Federal Trade Commission open an investigation into the advertising practices of Rockstar's parent company, Take-Two. As of press time, that investigation was still ongoing.

While Rockstar did not respond to *OPM*'s requests for comment on any of the backlash surrounding Hot Coffee, Take-Two Interactive did issue a general statement. "Take-Two and Rockstar Games have always worked to keep mature-themed videogame content out of the hands of children," said Paul Eibeler, president and CEO of Take-Two Interactive. "We will continue to work closely with the ESRB and community leaders to improve and better promote a reliable rating system to help consumers make informed choices about which videogames are appropriate for each individual."

LAWMAKERS ARE DEMANDING THAT CHILDREN BE PROTECTED.

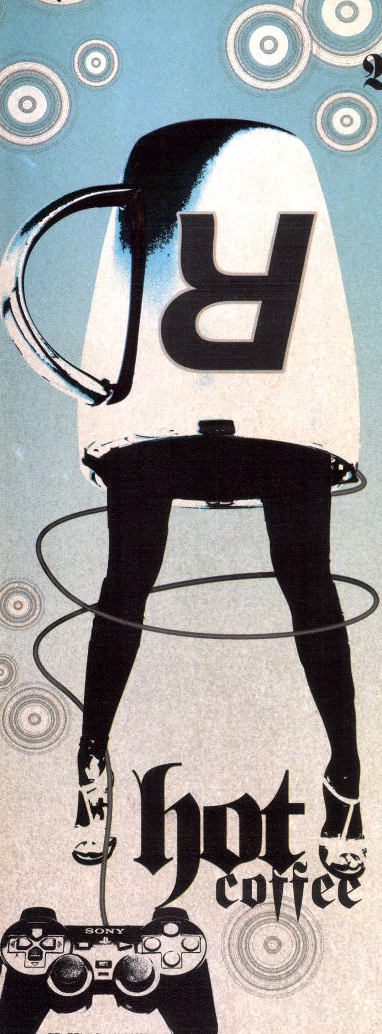
The ESRB came under fire as well for not catching the Hot Coffee mod when the game was originally submitted for a rating. But Vance is quick to point out that features not meant to be in the final game were, naturally, not part of the review process. "I don't think any rating board would've caught content that isn't playable. This didn't reveal a weakness to us, but it should indicate that the self-regulatory system is active and it's working."

So who's ultimately responsible for spilling the coffee? Rockstar denied that it put the code in the game in the first place and then got caught in the lie. The ESRB changed the game's rating after a huge wave of negative press. Retailers that often fail to enforce a voluntary ratings system, selling M-rated games (OK for 17+) to 12-year-olds, pulled the newly rated AO game (OK for 18+) from their store shelves. Adults who purchased for minors a game labeled with the descriptions "strong sexual content," "blood and gore," and "intense violence" filed lawsuits against game companies, alleging false advertising and consumer deception. And all of this has culminated in lawmakers jumping in to demand that our children be protected.

Have games gone too far? Perhaps they have. But the more important question should be whether individual members of the public should be allowed to decide that for themselves.

GOD OF PORN?

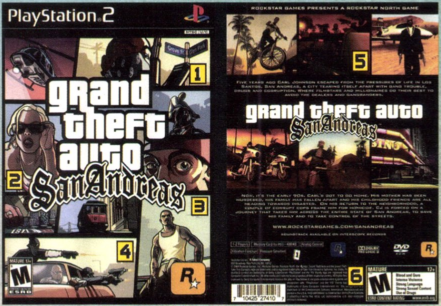
Any of you who have played *God of War* probably were a little surprised to find that the game has not only frontal nudity to accompany its ultraviolent gameplay, but also strong allusions to sexual activity. Why didn't it get an AO rating? ESRB president Patricia Vance says, "The bottom line is that our raters didn't view that sexual content to be as explicit [as the Hot Coffee game] or to warrant an AO rating. If you put the depictions side by side, you'll see that the Hot Coffee game is more explicit than the *God of War* game."



WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

A major by-product of Hot Coffee is litigation. One of the most noted lawsuits is that filed by Florence Cohen, an 85-year-old woman from New York, who had purchased the game for her 14-year-old grandson; the suit alleges that Rockstar Games engaged in false, misleading, and deceptive practices. How legitimate is her claim? We turned to the original *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* box to see whether it might have provided any indication that the game might not be appropriate for a 14-year-old. Here's what we found; you make your own call.

- 1) The nice-looking gentleman in the upper right-hand corner is holding an AK-47.
- 2) This girl on the left side of the box isn't sticking her tongue out to make a funny face at the camera.
- 3) The gun in Cesar's hand suggests that he probably is not sitting on the hood of his car waiting to see if someone needs help fixing a flat tire.
- 4) Drive-bys, just like mom used to make.
- 5) More guns and more drive-bys.
- 6) That big M in the bottom right-hand corner there states that the game is rated Mature, intended for the ages of 17 and up; upon closer inspection, you'll see that amidst the phrases "blood and gore," "extreme violence," "strong language," and "use of drugs," it also displays the words "strong sexual content."



Five years ago Carl Johnson escaped from the pressures of life in Los Santos, San Andreas, a city tearing itself apart with gang trouble, drugs and corruption. Where filmstars and millionaires do their best to avoid the dealers and gangbangers.

Now, it's the early 90s. Carl's got to go home. His mother has been murdered, his family has fallen apart and his childhood friends are all heading towards disaster. On his return to the neighborhood, a couple of corrupt cops frame him for homicide. CJ is forced on a journey that takes him across the entire state of San Andreas, to save his family and to take control of the streets.

WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/SANANDREAS

SOUNDTRACK AVAILABLE ON INTERSCOPE RECORDS

WHO'S PLAYING THE GAME?

A recent study released by the Entertainment Software Association shows that games are no longer just for kids. Around 43 percent of the gamers surveyed were between the ages of 18 and 49, while 19 percent were over the age of 50; only 35 percent of those surveyed were under 18, and 3 percent declined to give their age. Also interesting is a study by the Bureau of Justice Statistics and the Entertainment Software Association that shows the steady decline of violent crime offenses in relation to the increasing sales of computer and console games. So much for Senator Clinton's theory that games are corrupting the moral fiber of America's youth. «

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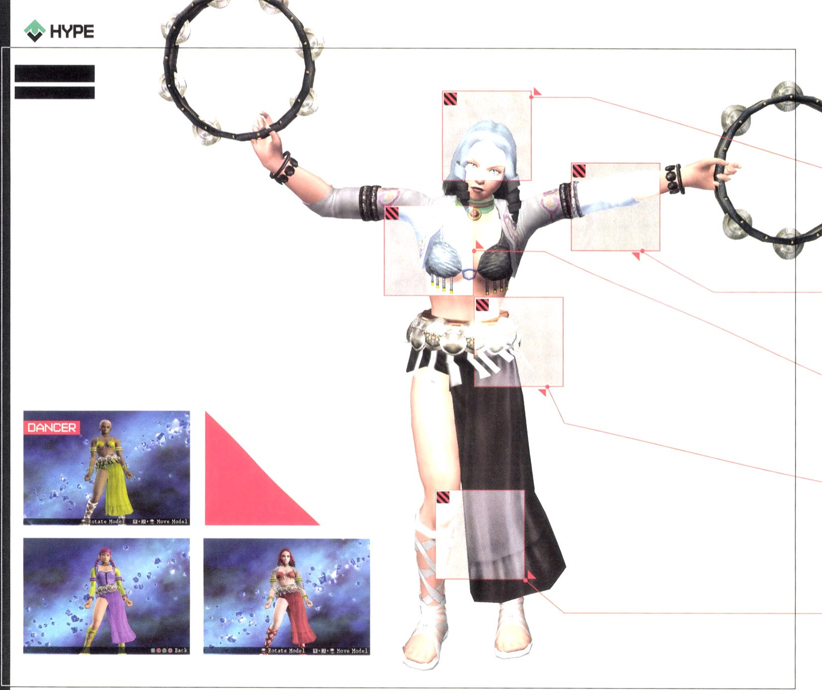
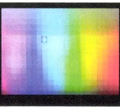


PUT YOUR SOUL INTO IT

A CLOSER LOOK AT SOUL CALIBUR III'S CHARACTER CREATION MODE

One of the biggest additions to *Soul Calibur III* is the character creation mode. Now, along with the default roster of characters, your own creations can battle it out on the stage of history. You can choose from several different fighting styles and weapons, as well as a countless number of clothing combinations. «

Pub. Namco **Dev.** Namco **Release** October



COLOR ME BAD

If you're not happy with the color of any item on your character—or their eye or hair color for that matter—then just change it. *Soul Calibur III*'s character creation mode offers a simple color grid that you can use to get everything to match, if you're so inclined.

The first thing you have to do in the character creation mode is select your gender and class. Your class pretty much determines your fighting style and the type of weapons your character has access to. If you choose to be a ninja, then your character will be much faster than most other character types, but your weapon reach will be severely limited. Here you can see the dancer class, which is a little more unorthodox than most of the others; it seems like it will be a little harder to master, but it certainly looks like it'll be fun to use once you get the hang of it.

I'LL FORM THE HEAD

The number of modifications you can make to a character's head is pretty staggering. In addition to being able to add things like hats, masks, and different hairstyles, you can also equip characters with eye patches and a variety of facial hairstyles (assuming you select a male character). Additionally, you can completely customize the color of your hair and all of the other accessories on your dome.

RAISE YOUR ARMS, SHAKE YOUR BODY

When it comes time to select your character's main garb, you'll find three options for the torso and one for the arms. One of the many great things about the character creation mode is that you don't have to stick to one clothing motif—you can even layer different types of clothing over each other to make them look a little more dynamic. Want to combine a dancer jacket with a thief belt? Voilà! Now you look a little more like John Rambo.

SHOULDERS ABOVE THE REST

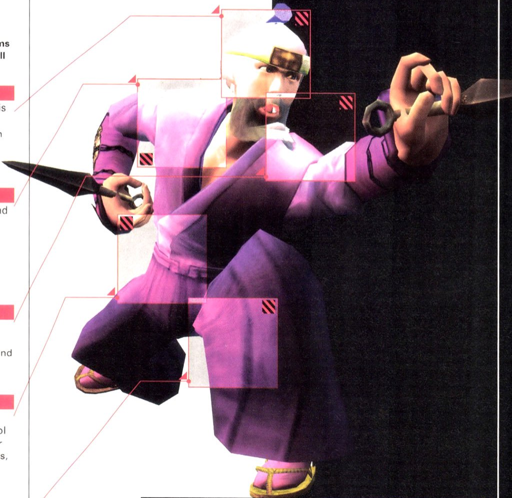
We singled out the shoulders because you can put some of the cooler accessories on them, namely shoulder pads. These aren't normal shoulder pads, mind you. Most of them are totally metal and will instantly make your character look like someone who stepped off the cover of an Iron Maiden album.

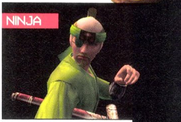
RING AROUND YOUR NECK...AND WAIST

There are plenty of options for the neck—almost too many, in fact! They range from the ridiculous (a clown collar) to the cool (prayer beads, like the ones Akuma wears in the *Street Fighter II* series). For the waist, you'll find traditional belts, karate belts, and other items related to specific jobs. None of these things has a direct effect on your skills; they're all just there for aesthetic purposes.

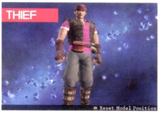
THE GREAT DOWN UNDER

The lower section of your character consists of lower leg, upper leg, shin, sock, and feet options. As you can tell, there's still plenty to do even after you've selected a main look. It's important to remember, particularly with the lower part of the body, that some clothing items will completely obscure others. For example, it really does no good to select a certain type of sock to go along with a boot, since the boot will probably just cover it up. This may seem trivial, but you don't want your character to look like an idiot, now do you?




NINJA

Rotate Model
Move Model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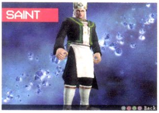
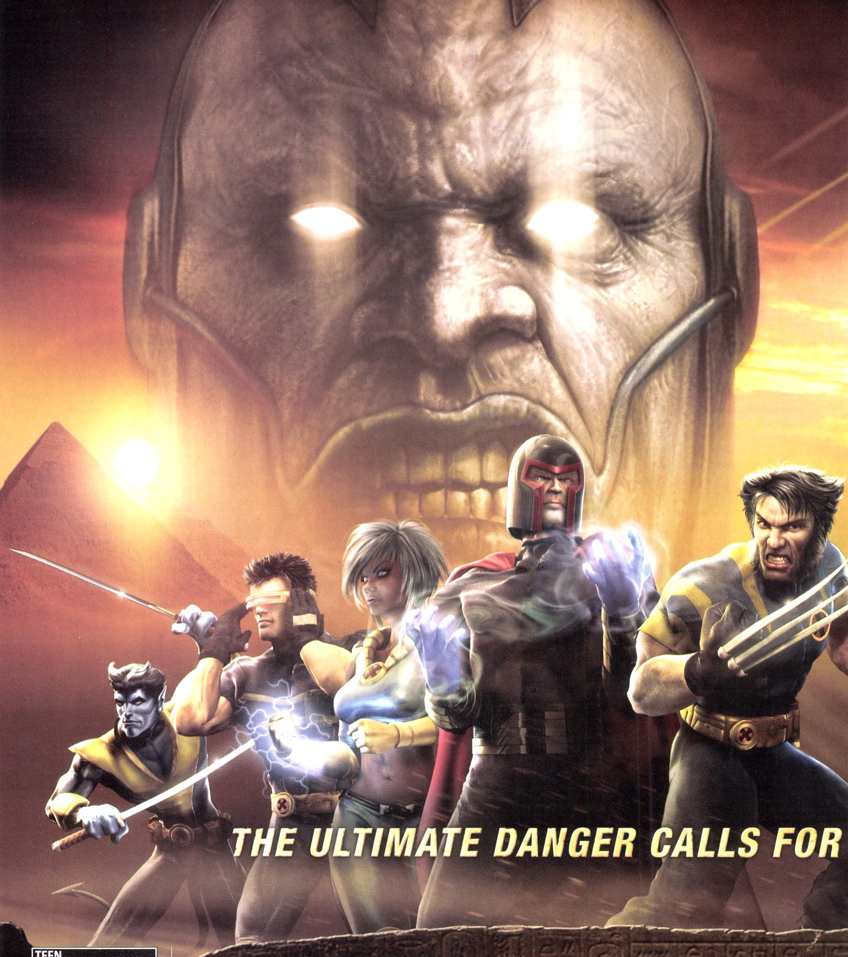

SAINT

Other classes in the character creation mode include the samurai (which you might suspect plays a little like Mitsurugi), the saint, and the thief. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses, so it's up to you to find them and adjust your fighting style accordingly.

TRY IT NEXT MONTH

The November issue of *OPM* will feature a playable demo of *Soul Calibur III*. The demo includes a brief section of the main mode, called tales of the souls, in which you fight as Kilik. The character creation mode is also available, although it features only a small fraction of what you'll find in the final game. Lastly, you'll be able to try a versus mode with Mitsurugi and Tira as playable characters. Have fun!

PlayStation Magazine
Issue 98
NTSC U/C
DVD ROM
SONY
RP-M
ESRB
PlayStation 2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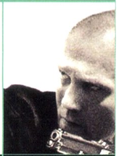
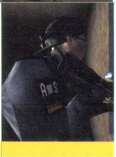
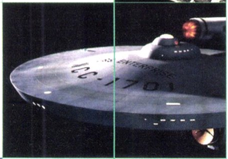
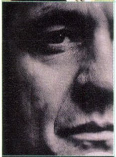
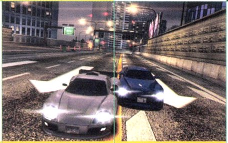
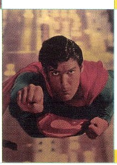
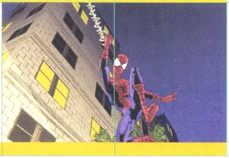
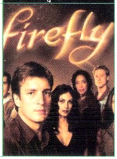
September 21, 2005

SEPTEMBER 2K5

THE MONTH AHEAD FOR YOU AND YOUR PLAYSTATION

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
				01 ***NHL 2K6, World Poker Tour, Call of Cthulhu, Top Spin,*** and ***Legend of Kay*** all shipped earlier this week. That's a whole lotta Labor Day gaming to get through!	**02** Before you celebrate your lack of work for the weekend, turn your brain off and watch cranky Brit Jason Statham beat dudes up and drive sweet rides in ***The Transporter 2.***	
	05 Guess who turns 65 today? In fact, that curvaceous cavewoman **Raquel Welch** does! Is she going to wear that animal-fur bikini? Well, that's not for your eyes.	**06** That tenderness in your pocket is only legal if you spend it! Buy ***Indigo Prophecy, One Piece Grand Battle, Gretzky 2006,*** and ***Rainbow Six: Lockdown***! **[NEW GAMES]**		**08** Since there's barely anything interesting coming out tomorrow, you can extend your celebration of the anniversary of **_Star Trek_'s first airing.** *Star Trek* is 39 years old today!		
	**12** This is a very sad day, as it's the second anniversary of **Johnny Cash's** death. Watch the video of his cover of "Hurt" and then reminisce about the Man in Black.	**13** If you have any change after getting ***Burnout Revenge,*** there's also ***Scooby-Doo! Unmasked, Evil Dead Regeneration,*** and ***Marc Ecko's Getting Up*** waiting. **[NEW GAMES]**			**16** Looky here, Nicky Cage is playing an arms dealer with a heart of gold in ***Lord of War.*** We're not making this up. Really. Hey, at least he's not playing Superman.	
	19 Pop a kernel for the anniversary of **Orville Redenbacher's** death today. He is happily playing canasta with Colonel Sanders in Old Man Mascot for Food Heaven.	**20** Cover star ***Shadow of the Colossus, Tak 3: The Great Juju Challenge, Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks, Genji,*** and ***X-Men Legends II*** are coming out today. **[NEW GAMES]**			**23** One day, Tim Burton heard a crazy Russian folktale about some dude who married a corpse. He decided to make a stop-motion movie, and voilà, ***Corpse Bride***!	Johnny Depp Helena Bonham Carter There's been a grave misunderstanding Tim Burton's Corpse Bride
25 Today is the birthday of the man who totally had us believing that he could fly. Take a silent moment to celebrate the birth of a true Superman, **Christopher Reeve**.		**27** Games like ***Ultimate Spider-Man, Commandos Strike Force, NBA Live 06,*** and ***The Suffering: Ties That Bind*** are supposed to ship. Have fun skipping school! **[NEW GAMES]**			**30** For all you who missed the awesome show ***Firefly,*** you can make it up by seeing ***Serenity*** today. It's newbie-friendly, but we still recommend buying the *Firefly* DVDs.	

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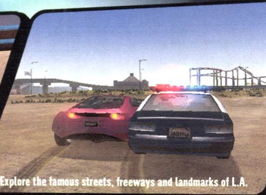
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BURNOUT REVENGE

RACING DOWN THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY

One of Criterion's biggest priorities when making *Burnout Revenge* was to speed up the process of getting online. "Our online game experience last year was exceptional—once you got into the game," says Matt Webster, executive producer of *Burnout Revenge*. "This year, we wanted to bring in a streamlined system that allows people to get online with their friends as quickly and as smoothly as possible."

One thing the team has done is introduce a one-button element. "If I just want to get online right away, I can go online with my EA account, hit a button that says 'Play Now,' and it goes and finds me a race that has a spare slot against people that have an equal skill level to me," says Webster. Of course, if you want more control, you also have the option to search for a specific type of race based on a number of criteria that you set.

The PS2 version takes a cue from how Xbox Live is set up. "We've made it easier for people to hook up with their buddies and create parties," Webster promises. Instead of having to figure out the details of connecting—which room, which race, which backup in case that one is full—you simply invite anyone from your buddy list to be part of a party. From then on, your party is linked together until you choose to abandon it.

The team is also incorporating online progression into the game. Rather than having to spend 10 or 15 hours of single-player time to unlock the cars you want in order to bring them online, you'll now be able to do the exact same thing while playing against others. You unlock content by earning points in competitions; beating players who are ranked higher than you will result in more points than you'll get by beating up on lesser players. Beware, however: While unlocked single-player content will be accessible when you go online, you won't be able to transfer the content you unlocked online to your single-player experience.

Other changes simply have to do with making all versions of the game technologically compatible. Due to a difference in electrical standards, American and Japanese *Burnout 3* players weren't able to compete against European *Burnout 3* players. "This time we want to be global so everyone can play everyone," says Webster.

You'll see all the modes that were in the last version; one of the new additions is crash battle. In this mode, up to six players can enter a round-robin type of contest, with two players competing at a time. For example, if the staff of *OPM* were to set up a contest among some of its editors, the first round could start off with Joe and Dana facing off to see who can cause the most damage in a crash (or who can take the other out), followed by Scooter taking on Giancarlo. In the second round, Joe could play against Scooter, and Dana could compete with Giancarlo; the third round would result in matches of Joe versus Giancarlo and Dana versus Scooter. At the end of the battle, the person who has scored the most overall points would be declared the overall winner.

> THE PS2 VERSION TAKES A CUE FROM XBOX LIVE.

Another new mode is crash tour. As Webster explains it, "Our analogy for crash mode is golf, so in crash tour, I'll set a number of rounds, I'll choose the junctions we're going to play, and then there'll be a target score, and we'll each get a certain number of tries to try and reach the score. So maybe the score will be 12 million that you need to get on this crash; if it's par 3, you'll get three attempts to accumulate that score."

So will all of this add up to an experience that tops last year's Game of the Year? Check next month for our review and find out. «

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** Criterion **Release** September

PlayStation

TAKE A TEST DRIVE

PLAY THE DEMO ON THIS MONTH'S DISC

This month's exclusive PS2 demo (on the disc inside this very mag) gives you a chance to try the game out for yourself. The race (which is set in Detroit) is very straightforward: Beat your five rivals. However, there are a lot of new techniques you can begin practicing to help you become the master of disaster once the full game comes out. See which of the following you can perfect:

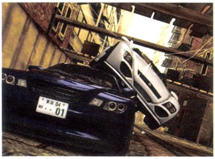
1. **Find the shortcut.** Unlike *Burnout 3*, which has very straightforward courses, *Burnout Revenge* is absolutely riddled with shortcuts. Each track has a number of alleyways, ramps, and bypasses for you to discover. Use them right, and they can shave seconds off your time, but watch where you're going, as embankments can pop up seemingly out of nowhere.

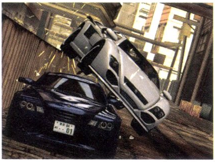
2. **Go vertical.** One of the bonuses of multilayered tracks is the ability to take out your opponent in new and creative ways. Try using those ramps for destructive purposes—you can fly off the end of a ramp and land directly on top of a rival to execute one of the game's new additions, the vertical takedown.

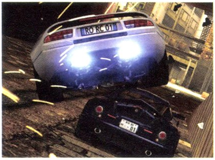
3. **Play in traffic.** Rather than getting taken out by that pokey sedan that gets in your way, you can now use the extraneous traffic to your advantage. If you're coming up behind a random car, bump into it from behind to send it sailing ahead. After some practice, you should be able to use the other cars as missiles to help you take out rivals. But be careful: Big trucks and buses and oncoming traffic of all types will still take you out.

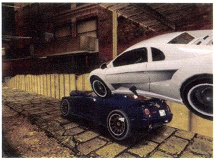
4. **Blow away the enemy.** Everybody hurts sometimes. If you take that turn too fast and end up smashing into a wall, you'll have the chance to use a crashbreaker. Be judicious with your explosions, though—if you see an enemy hurtling toward you, it pays to wait till he's close and then take him out with the power of the blast. For even more points go for two or more opponents at once.

5. **Rack 'em up.** It's not just about winning anymore: In addition to race placement, you're also getting ranked on your overall driving performance. Overtake the other contestants to help increase your driving skill points, pump up your takedowns and reckless driving to increase your aggression points, and get back at other contestants to increase your revenge points.







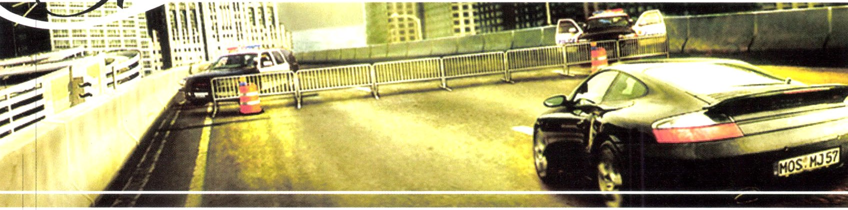


A SOLITARY ENDEAVOR

Sadly, traffic attack will not be available as an online mode. As Webster explained to us, "We had a plan for traffic attack online, but it became apparent that we weren't able to execute it to the level that we thought we needed to. It's such an amazing experience offline, and moving it online would have just caused too many compromises to the gameplay system, so we made the decision to pull it."

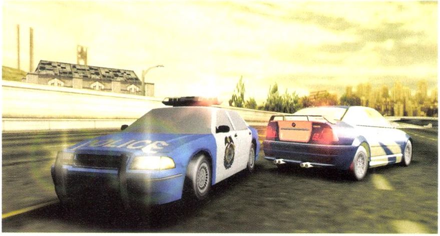
NEED FOR SPEED: Most Wanted

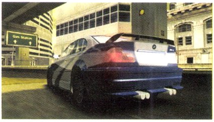
BE THE MAN

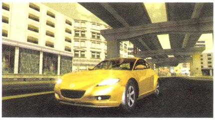


It might not come as a huge shock that EA's new take on the *Need for Speed* series is coming to the PSP, but you might be surprised to know that it will have a completely exclusive feature—you get to play as the cops. Sure, it's thrilling to be on the wrong side of the law, outrunning the police at speeds surpassing 100 mph, but it's going to be just as fun to don the uniform and chase after the bandits. More specifically, the mode that lets you play as a cop is appropriately titled "tuner takedown." In it, you need to deal with a limited amount of time and specific cars. As you take down cars, more time is added to the clock, giving you the chance to arrest even more speed demons. If you're good enough, you can unlock additional cop cars (we're hoping to unlock a totally sweet Acura RSX).

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** EA Canada **Rel.** November



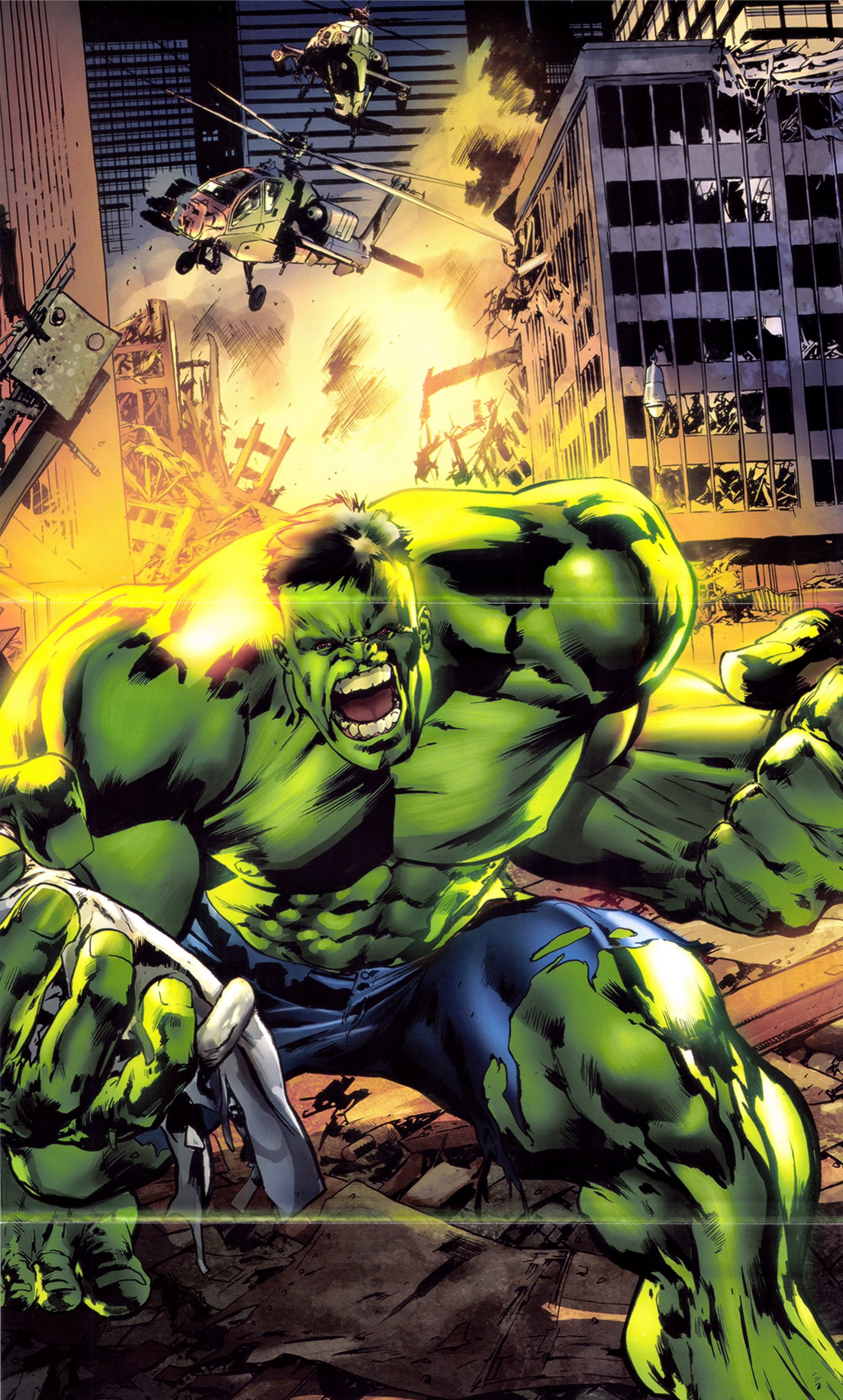




HOW DO YOU MAKE AN ARREST?

You can arrest drivers out on the track by making them spin out, by constantly ramming into them, or by pushing them into barriers. Just make sure you get their health bars down to zero so you can go in for the arrest. You can also take the easy way out and simply run them off the road.

Of course, *Most Wanted* on the PSP will have many of the same features as its console counterpart. There's still plenty of street racing, and there will also be a multiplayer feature that lets you compete against three other players on one of the many tracks featured in the game.



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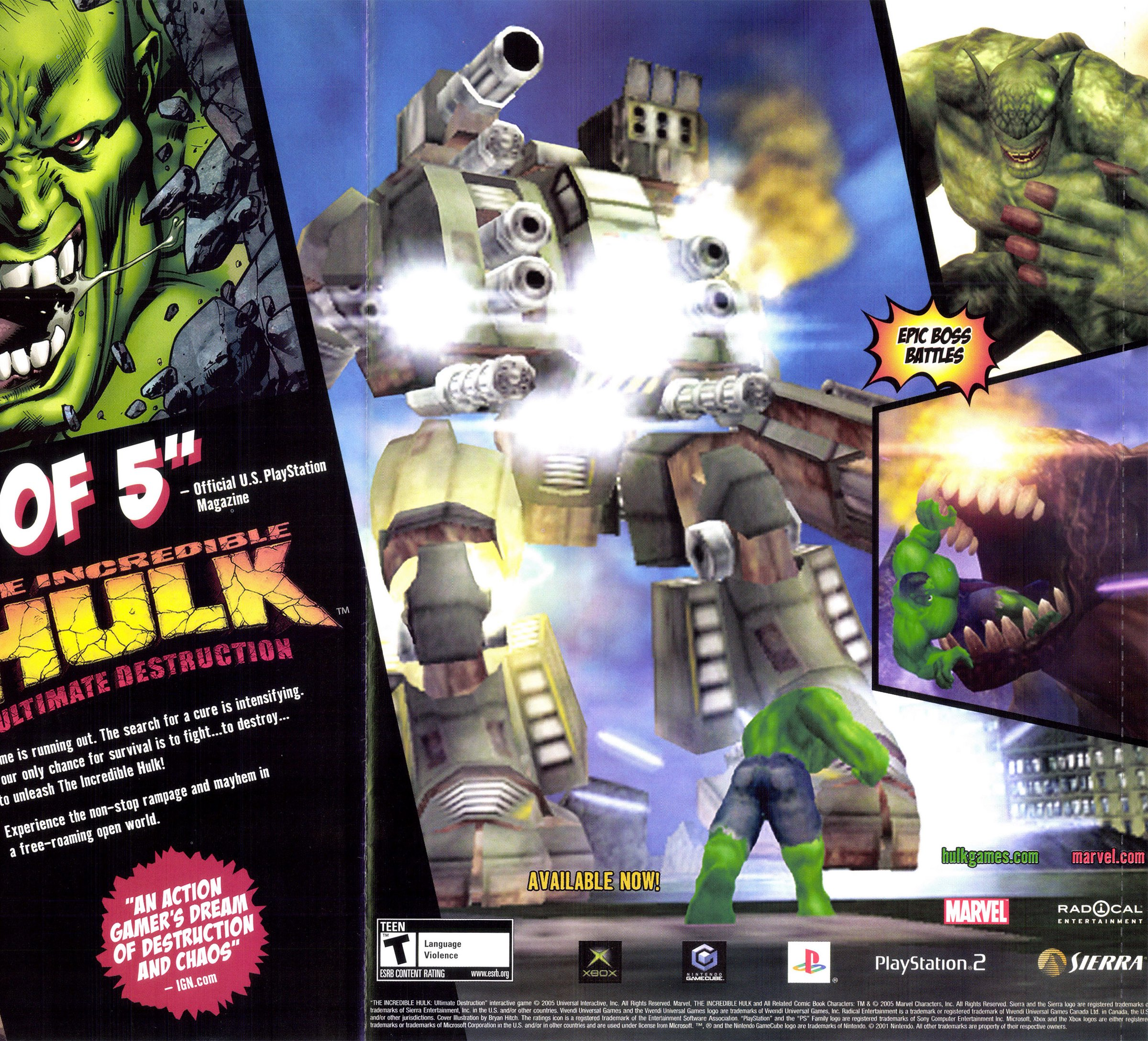

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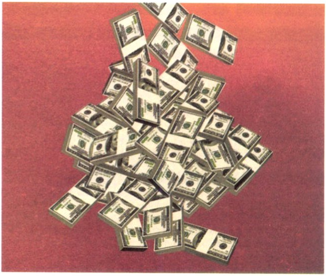
NEWS

GOD OF THE SILVER SCREEN

Everyone's favorite arm-ripping, zombie-decapitating hero may be appearing in his very own movie thanks to Universal Pictures. The studio has acquired the rights to produce a movie based on *God of War*. Charles Roven (*The Brothers Grimm*, *Batman Begins*) and Alex Gartner (*Barbershop 2*, err, right) will take over the responsibility of producing the film should it ever see the light of day. Let's hope they make the gods proud. «

LIONS, TIGERS, AND BEARS

It looks as though the rumored relationship between Apple and Sony isn't completely dead. An update to Sony's U.K. website recently revealed that not only will the PlayStation 3 support the Linux operating system, but that it may also support Apple's OSX Tiger operating system. Whether this has any relevance to end users is not currently known, but it's reflective of Sony's strategy to market the PS3 as a computer and an entertainment device. «



SAG NO LONGER SUX

Approximately 81.2 percent of the Screen Actors Guild membership voted to approve the Interactive Media Agreement, a contract that allows members of the Screen Actors Guild to lend their voice work to videogames. Actors who participate in videogames will have an increase in base pay, but the contract doesn't give actors residuals based on game sales, so it appears that it doesn't really matter whether they're doing voiceovers for *Madden* or for *Barbie's Big Horse Caper 3*. «

ZOE FLOWER

I WANT MY UMD

ZOE FLOWER is a longtime *OPM* columnist and avid conspiracy theorist. She studied Greek mythology briefly and also spent a year in equestrian school until she was bitten by a horse named Tchaikovsky. She still likes classical music, though.

As I do most every summer, I've whiled away most of my time by lounging in the sunshine, taking road trips to weddings, drinking mojitos on the patio, and swimming at the lake. During the rare moments I head indoors to escape the hazy heat or switch out the Jack Johnson CD, I find myself sneaking a regretful glimpse at my PS2. Does anyone else feel this kind of separation guilt? I don't know if my summer disinterest is an unfortunate side effect of my disappointment (raging anger) over a recent build of *Shadow of the Colossus* or just a general sense of depression over the lack of exciting titles to add to my Christmas list. Yes, usually by this time of year I have an extensive wish list!

I'm just not sure what to do. I like to think of myself as a glass (and memory card) half full kind of girl, so why the bad attitude? I guess I had assumed this summer would be rife with solitary beach time complete with a backpack full of bad Danielle Steel novels and, more important, a PSP with more than *Lumines* to keep me company. Am I just picky about my games, or is it time to accept that the PSP has been somewhat slow to deliver on content? Of course, with the extra time gained by not playing games, I naturally started to ponder this quandary. It was during a rainy August morning that I had an epiphany while half watching *Live With Regis and Kelly* (don't laugh at me! At least I don't watch *The View*!).

I swear I have a Pavlovian reflex to that fanfare that plays behind the 20th Century Fox logo before a movie. Sure enough, there is an ad during the commercial break for yet another movie coming to DVD that we need to know about. I can't help but watch even though it's a flick I've seen and don't really even care about. What really catches my attention is the string of acronyms at the bottom of the screen…"coming soon to DVD and UMD for PSP." Suddenly, the phone is ringing and it's my mom—"What's UMD? Will it play in my VCR?" A light goes on deep in my precaffeinated brain. The PSP is the Trojan horse of mainstream media.

SONY HAS INFILTRATED THE HOME VIDEO MARKET WITH UMD.

Think about it. I thought it was weird to create a new disc format for PSP—and even weirder to offer movies lots of people would already own on DVD. But I think I see the strategy now. The average nongaming adult, despite being inundated with videogame ads between their favorite sitcoms, can just tune out the material they have zero interest in (in the same way I can tune out Viagra and incontinence commercials). But suddenly, Sony has managed to quietly infiltrate the massive mainstream entertainment market of home video with its new UMD format, pushing videogames in front of the eager eyes of movie fans (i.e., everyone). Even the name fits—Universal Media!

Perhaps the PSP wasn't meant to excite those of us who already love games, but rather execute a sneak attack on those who haven't embraced our passion. Let's just hope this Trojan horse finds the necessary army of games to back it up. «

RESIDENT EVIL 4

CAPCOM'S HORRORFEST LEAPS FROM THE GAMECUBE TO THE PS2

It took only 11 days into the New Year for what many consider to be a leading Game of the Year contender to appear. *Resident Evil 4* came out on January 11 for the GameCube and quickly swept up accolades from the press due to its complete redefinition of traditional *Resident Evil* gameplay. And now this fall, not only are we getting a faithful translation of *RE4*, but the PS2 version is getting additional features that might make it better than the original.

If you're not familiar with *RE4*, or even the franchise in general, don't fret. The previous *RE*s are slower, more puzzle-based adventures. They feature static backgrounds, a distant third-person perspective, and an emphasis on escape rather than combat. Their slower mechanics tend to either sour or scare away players, both prospective and veteran. They feel like old-school zombie movies. At certain points in its development, *RE4* maintained this feel, but then it transformed into something wholly different.

RE4 is no longer a survival-horror game, but rather action-horror. The camera isn't positioned far away, but instead right over your shoulder. You do not conserve ammo; you spend it. You don't try to avoid the baddies; you face them head-on. The enemies aren't slow, plodding zombies; rather, they're rapidly moving villagers who use team tactics, scream at you in Spanish, and wield weapons such as pitchforks, dynamite sticks, guns, and chain saws. The story isn't even about Umbrella Corporation and its evil zombie-making virus (a staple from past *RE* titles)—it's about Leon, the rookie cop from *RE2*, saving the president's daughter from crazed villagers in the European wilderness. *RE4*'s gameplay is a mixture of pure action, resource management, weapon balancing and upgrading, hostage protecting, treasure hunting, and reaction timing (when you're called to suddenly press a button or two during a cut-scene to do certain actions, such as dodge knives or cut parasites out of enemies).

That's all well and good, but everyone who played it noticed how great the graphics were for the GameCube. *RE4* PS2 producer Masachika Kawata notes, "The original *Resident Evil 4* pushed the graphical limits of the GameCube and realized the hardware's true potential." So the most immediate concern that most gamers had with the announcement of the PS2 version of the game was how the graphics would be carried over. Everyone expected *RE4* on PS2 to look like a horrid graphical rush job, but as you'll see from these screens, the game actually looks pretty good, plus it runs at a smooth framerate. "At first, we were actually afraid that it might not even be possible to port it over," Kawata explains. "It has, of course, taken a lot of work to re-create everything, from the graphics to the characters and backgrounds, etc. Despite the challenges, I think our team has been able to push the processing abilities of the PS2 hardware to its limits in order to maintain the game's high graphical standard." The textures still look quite sharp, the characters are still detailed, and the real-time cut-scenes still look good.

If anything, *RE4* (along with games like *God of War, Metal Gear Solid 3,* and the upcoming *Black*) shows that the PS2 has a fair bit of life left. Kawata muses, "In porting this title to the PS2, we experienced firsthand that there was a lot of untapped potential with the PS2 hardware; perhaps developers can push the hardware even further."

When asked what he's most proud of so far with *RE4* on PS2, Kawata answers, "I am most proud of the fact that we have been able to make this PS2 version something that shows off *RE4*'s appeal as a game, as well as showcases Capcom's development team's talent in making it happen." Now that you know the game will look and play the same as its predecessor, keep reading to learn about all the other extras that have been added to the PS2 version.

Pub. Capcom **Dev.** Capcom **Release** November

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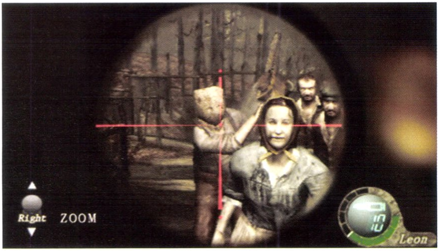
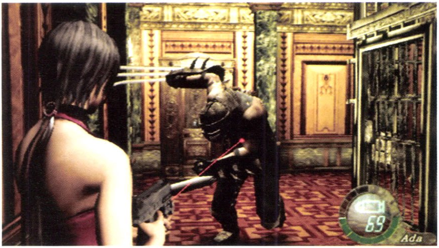
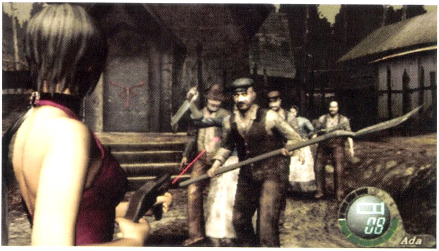
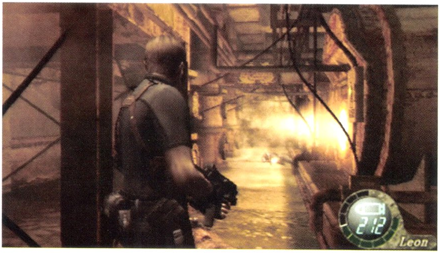
EXCLUSIVE









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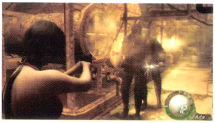

MERCENARIES

Still present in the PS2 version is the unlockable minigame Mercenaries. In it, you simply see how many points you can score (based on the number of enemies you kill) within a time limit. Mercenaries is a measure of pure action skill, as you race around the level, string together death combos (successive kills result in bonus points), and find time extenders or point bonuses. High scores lead to unlockable special characters to play Mercenaries with and better weapons to use in the main game.

[redacted]

WIDESCREEN AND YOU

***RE4* on the GameCube** sports a cinematic look with its use of letterboxing (in which black bars are placed on the top and bottom of the screen), yet for those gamers lucky enough to play on a widescreen television, those black bars are still irritatingly present. Not only will the PS2 version support progressive scan and Dolby Pro Logic II (like the GC version), but it will also feature true widescreen support. If you jumped the gun by getting a widescreen television in preparation for the PS3, then this is important for you.

The basic principle behind widescreen-supported game display is that because the original image of the game is rectangular, when you play it on a square television, there are black bars on the top and bottom to compensate. When you play it on a widescreen television, then, the game should recognize that the television is also rectangular and expand the image to fit the screen. In most cases of converting a square image into a rectangular one, the view is made "wider" and extra information is added to the sides to create the rectangle. Except games like *God of War* don't do that; instead, they cut the top and bottom off the image—so while you get a rectangular image, you actually see less than you would on a regular television.

The PS2 version of *RE4* already features rectangular images (hence the black bars), recognizes the rectangular screen, and expands proportionally to fill the screen appropriately, so you lose nothing in the process. And obviously, it's easier to spot details on an image that fills up the whole television as opposed to one displayed on only two-thirds of the screen.

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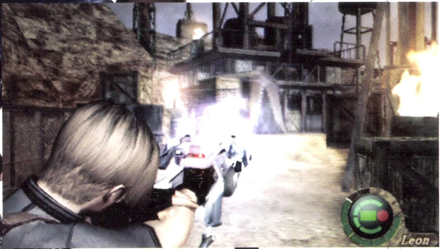
Leon's gigantic gun shoots out a powerful beam when charged up. At least, that's what we heard him bragging about to the ladies at the bar the other night.



NEW WEAPON

The team is still conceptualizing possible weapons (we're really hoping for a flamethrower), but we can explain what the Plagas Removal Laser 412 is. Well, OK, we still don't know where you find it or what the context of finding it is, but we know that you charge it up to shoot a beam that instantly destroys the plagas—the parasites infecting people—in an enemy.

This is significant because it presents an alternative method to killing one of the hardest enemies in the game, the Regenerator. In the GameCube version, the Regenerator is an enemy that can instantly heal any injuries, and the only way to kill it is to use a sniper rifle with an infrared scope. The scope allows you to see the plagas squirming around inside it, and once you kill the individual plagas, the Regenerator can't heal anymore. With the PRL, if you don't have the time or space to use the sniper rifle, you can just charge up the laser and zap those plagas. Nice!

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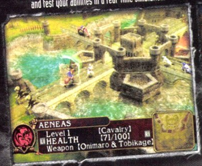

AENEAS
Level 1 【Cavalry】
HEALTH 【71/100】
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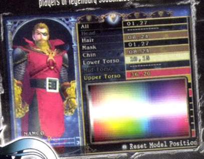

All	01.27
Head	----------
Hair	08.24
Mask	01.27
Chin	08.24
Lower Torso	10.15
Mid-Torso	----------
Upper Torso	36.20

The battle begins anew in SOULCALIBUR III when Nightmare returns to a world inhabited by classic and new warriors. Choose your character's face, hair, armor and weapons in "Character Creation" mode, then lead him in strategic battles through "Chronicles of the Sword" mode. Experience the world of SOULCALIBUR like never before.

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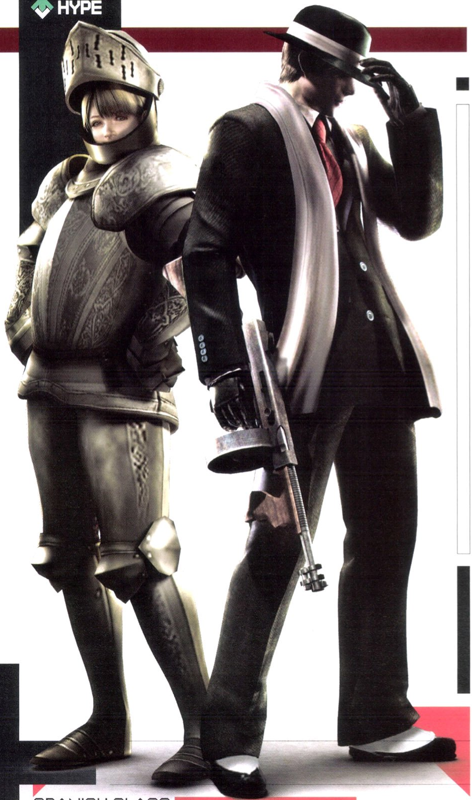
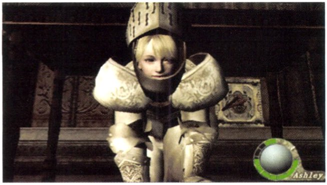
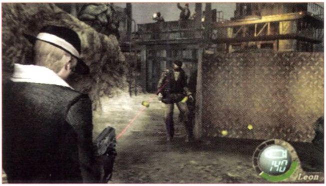


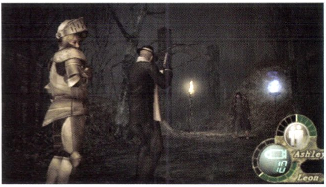
SPANISH CLASS

We doubt that teachers would buy our argument that *Resident Evil 4* qualifies as edutainment, but the game does use a lot of Spanish words as names for people and objects in the game. Below are some of them, with translations.

SPANISH NAME	ROLE IN GAME	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Armaduras	An enemy	Armor
Del Lago	A boss	Of the lake
Ganados	Townspeople	Cattle
Garrador	An enemy	Clawed one
El Gigante	A boss	The giant
Los Iluminados	The monks	The enlightened
Perros locos	Dogs infected with plagas	Crazy dogs
Peseta	Game currency	A Spanish coin
Plagas	Parasites	Plagues
Verdugo	A boss	Executioner







NEW COSTUMES

Leon sports traditional combat gear (black 5.11 tactical shirt and pants, sweet bomber jacket that he loses) as his default costume, while Ashley just looks like a normal 20-year-old college student. When you finish *RE4* on the GameCube, you unlock new costumes for both Leon and Ashley—he gets a Raccoon City Police Department (RPD) uniform, and she can don a "pop sensation" outfit. The PS2 version offers a second set of unlockable costumes: a slick, Chicago-gangster suit for Leon (made specifically to match the unlockable "Chicago Typewriter" machine gun) and a knight's suit of armor for Ashley. While Leon's "moonwalker" look is cosmetic, Ashley's costume actually affects gameplay. Kawata explains: "Ashley's knight costume is both tough and heavy, changing the whole gameplay dynamic. Leon does not have to protect her as diligently, and he can shoot at enemies without having to worry about her as much. We decided to use this particular costume in order to make it easier on players as they go through the game." This means that Ashley won't be snapped in half or get torn up in gunfire as much anymore; she can actually last on her own for a few minutes instead of a few seconds.

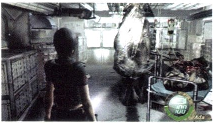
MAKE SOME POPCORN

Two neat unlockable PS2-only extras are movie viewer and Ada's report. The movie viewer is pretty self-explanatory—it lets you watch the game's cut-scenes. The only question is whether you'll be able to watch cut-scenes that have action-button events (like when Leon is navigating the laser-filled hallway). Ada's report is extra story content in the form of new videos and text files. All, presumably, from Ada's point of view. Good fodder for epic *RE4* fan fiction!

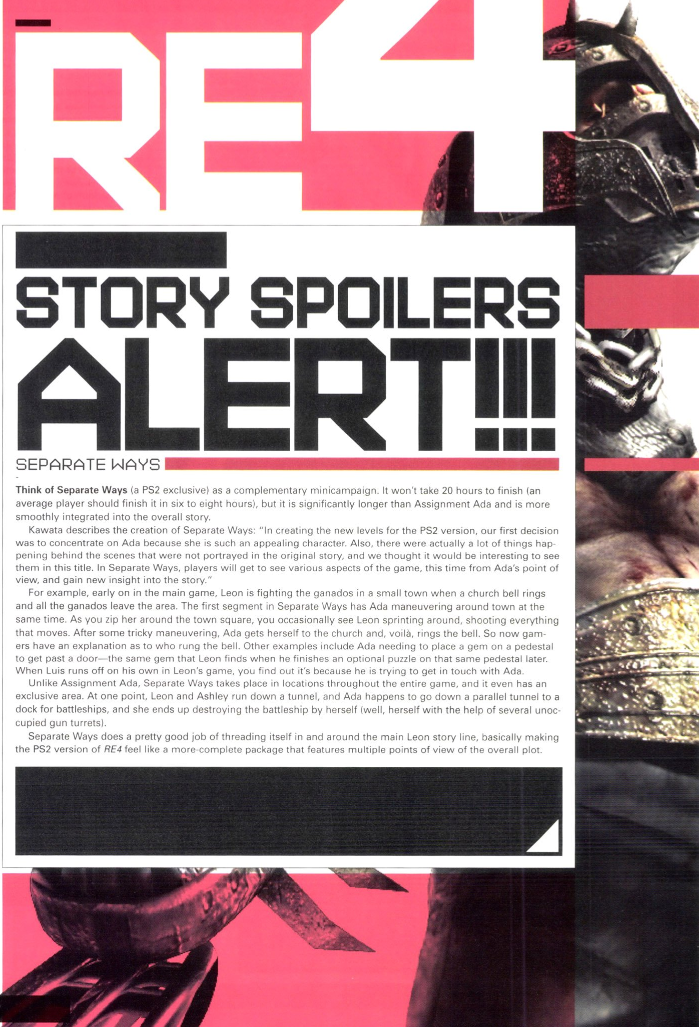
According to Ada's report, her turn-ons include a sense of humor, shopping, and Glock 9mms. her turn-offs include mean people, smoking, and geeky RPGs.

ASSIGNMENT ADA

One of the mysteries in *RE4*'s story centers on Ada Wong's (from *RE2*) involvement in the plot. Like Mercenaries, Assignment Ada is a bonus minigame that you unlock when you finish the game—it takes the form of a small side quest that shows a little bit of what Ada was up to during the tail end of the game. It's pretty short (a good player can finish it in under an hour on the first try), pretty simplistic (you just need to find some trinkets), and gives a small bit of background info on the story. Ultimately, however, it's a bit inconsequential.



RE4



STORY SPOILERS ALERT!!!!

SEPARATE WAYS

Think of Separate Ways (a PS2 exclusive) as a complementary minicampaign. It won't take 20 hours to finish (an average player should finish it in six to eight hours), but it is significantly longer than Assignment Ada and is more smoothly integrated into the overall story.

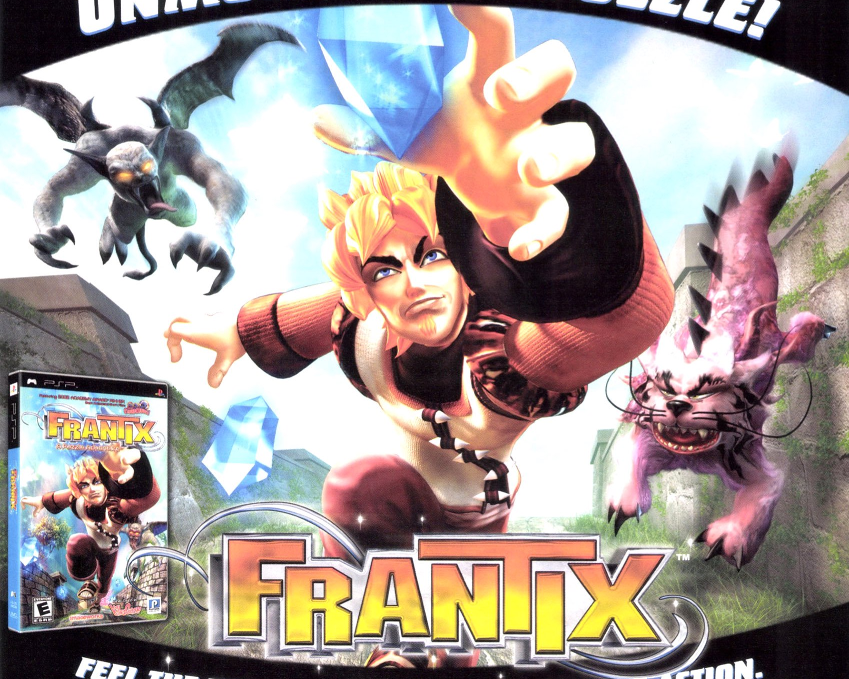
Kawata describes the creation of Separate Ways: "In creating the new levels for the PS2 version, our first decision was to concentrate on Ada because she is such an appealing character. Also, there were actually a lot of things happening behind the scenes that were not portrayed in the original story, and we thought it would be interesting to see them in this title. In Separate Ways, players will get to see various aspects of the game, this time from Ada's point of view, and gain new insight into the story."

For example, early on in the main game, Leon is fighting the ganados in a small town when a church bell rings and all the ganados leave the area. The first segment in Separate Ways has Ada maneuvering around town at the same time. As you zip her around the town square, you occasionally see Leon sprinting around, shooting everything that moves. After some tricky maneuvering, Ada gets herself to the church and, voilà, rings the bell. So now gamers have an explanation as to who rung the bell. Other examples include Ada needing to place a gem on a pedestal to get past a door—the same gem that Leon finds when he finishes an optional puzzle on that same pedestal later. When Luis runs off on his own in Leon's game, you find out it's because he is trying to get in touch with Ada.

Unlike Assignment Ada, Separate Ways takes place in locations throughout the entire game, and it even has an exclusive area. At one point, Leon and Ashley run down a tunnel, and Ada happens to go down a parallel tunnel to a dock for battleships, and she ends up destroying the battleship by herself (well, herself with the help of several unoccupied gun turrets).

Separate Ways does a pretty good job of threading itself in and around the main Leon story line, basically making the PS2 version of *RE4* feel like a more-complete package that features multiple points of view of the overall plot.

UNMUZZLE THE PUZZLE!



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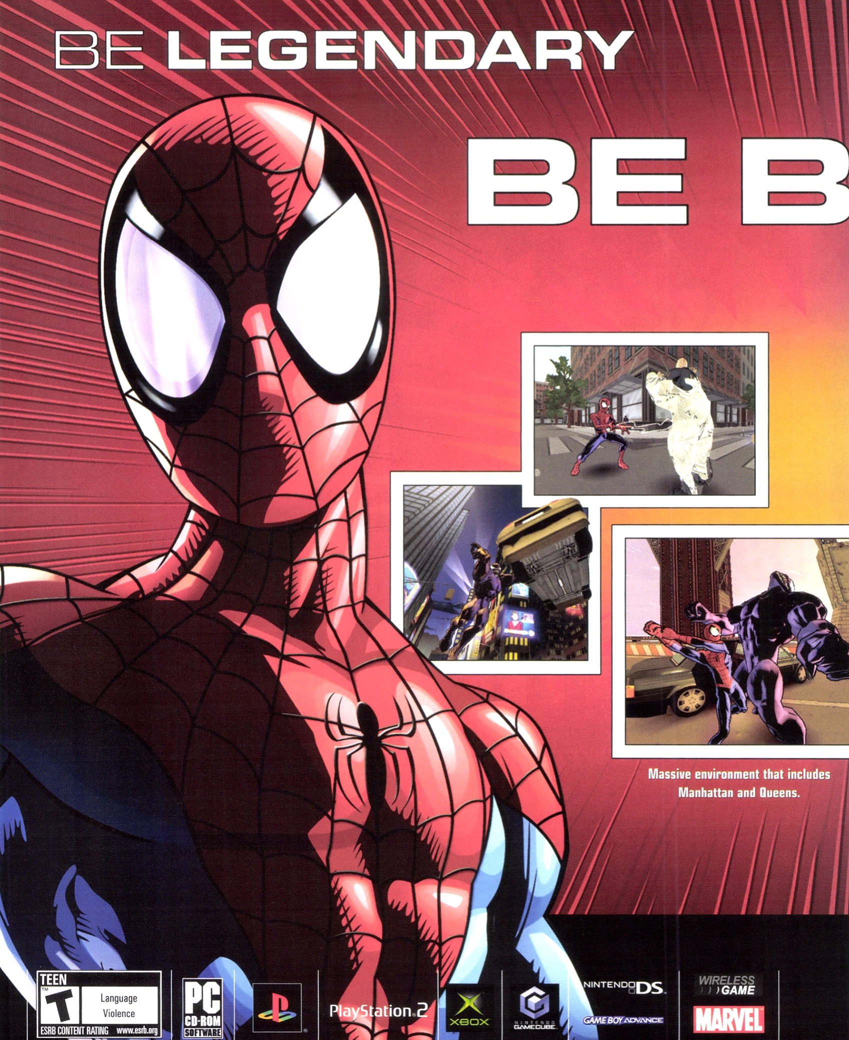

Massive environment that includes Manhattan and Queens.

TEEN
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Language
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PS3 WATCH

THE LATEST PS3 NEWS FROM TOKYO'S ANNUAL PLAYSTATION MEETING

In July, Sony Computer Entertainment President Ken Kutaragi and various third-party PlayStation 3 developers took to the stage in Tokyo for the PlayStation Meeting to discuss some of the basic features of the PS3, including its support for HD resolutions and backward compatibility with PS1 and PS2 games, and to reveal more information on previously announced games, as well as completely new projects.

RESIDENT EVIL 5

BLINDED BY THE LIGHT—OR BY A ZOMBIE

The *Resident Evil 5* trailer was probably the biggest surprise at the show. It features a character (who looks similar to Chris Redfield from the original *Resident Evil* and *Resident Evil Code: Veronica*) wandering through what appears to be a bombed-out town in the middle of the desert. After showing a little more of the game's main character, the trailer quickly reveals that the undead return yet again, as a group of zombies are shown shuffling off the street. Within seconds, these same zombies burst into a sprint as they dash toward the character, who then turns around with his gun drawn to take care of some business.

WHY IS IT A BIG DEAL?

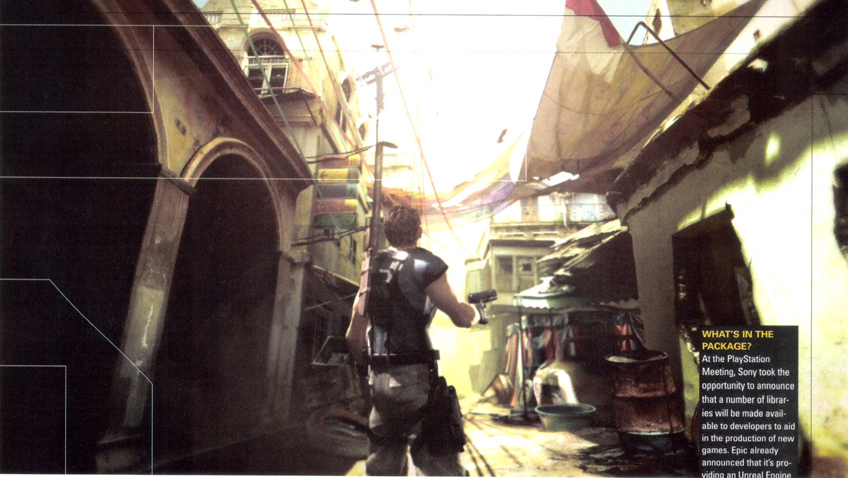
Come on, it's *Resident Evil*! While some might argue that the series took a bit of a dive after becoming GameCube exclusive, *Resident Evil 4* single-handedly restored the franchise to prominence because of significant changes made by producers Shinji Mikami and Hiroyuki Kobayashi (be sure to check out our exclusive coverage of the PS2 version on page 36). Plus, it'll be great to see what the team comes up with and whether they plan to make any other changes based on feedback they received for *Resident Evil 4*.

CHRIS, IS THAT YOU?

You may remember Chris Redfield as one of the original members of the STARS Alpha team (along with Jill Valentine, Albert Wesker, and Barry Burton). That team was originally sent into Raccoon City to rescue the Bravo team that had met its demise at the hands of feisty zombies. If you played as Chris Redfield in the original *Resident Evil*, you noticed that he can't carry as many items as the other playable character, Jill Valentine, but that he makes up for it with his increased energy and can-do spirit. There are several different endings on Chris' path, and while none of them has been specifically cited as the "correct" ending (there is some mention of which ending is correct in Wesker's Report, which can be found in *Code: Veronica*), we do know that Chris and Jill both survive the initial adventure.

BACKWARD COMPATIBILITY AND YOU

There's a reason why backward compatibility is such an important feature, at least in a marketing sense. Square Enix is already using this feature to promote *Final Fantasy XII* as somewhat of a PlayStation 3 game, since it will, in fact, technically be playable on the PS3 (that is, when the game actually comes out). This means that either the PS3 will have to use the same memory cards as the PS2, or it will have to include a feature for saving to different formats.



WHAT'S IN THE PACKAGE?
At the PlayStation Meeting, Sony took the opportunity to announce that a number of libraries will be made available to developers to aid in the production of new games. Epic already announced that it's providing an Unreal Engine 3 software development kit (or SDK) that includes visual tools as well as tools for creating online options. Two physics SDKs, the PhysX toolset and the Havok engine toolset, will also be available for developers, which should make it easier to not only get projects off the ground, but also to port PC games.

Chris doesn't appear again until *Resident Evil Code: Veronica* for the Dreamcast, the first game in the series to feature fully 3D environments and a somewhat dynamic camera. His reasons for returning are simple: He learns that the Umbrella Corporation has taken his sister, Claire (from *Resident Evil 2*), captive, and he plans to break her out. The ending reveals the origins of the T-Virus and leaves room for a sequel—one that could put Chris back into the *Resident Evil* limelight.

IS THAT REAL TIME?

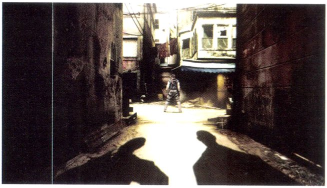
While the *Resident Evil 5* trailer may seem unbelievably spectacular, there's nothing that suggests it couldn't be done in real time on the PlayStation 3 hardware. In fact, it looks like it's running in real time on Xbox 360 hardware, which will also see a version of *Resident Evil 5*.

IT'S JUST THE THRILLER!

Obviously, there isn't a whole lot you can take from the trailer in terms of gameplay. It looks like Capcom plans to retain the excellent over-the-shoulder camera featured in *Resident Evil 4*. It also looks like the zombies will be getting a speed boost, but the most important gameplay element seems to have nothing to do with zombies or the main character. Rather, the most important element is the game's lighting. Previous *Resident Evil* games have always been plenty dark, relying on shadows and dark corridors for scares, but imagine what it might be like in *Resident Evil 5* to be utterly blinded by the sunlight or to see changes as you move from the shadows into the light. There are a whole bunch of possibilities, but like the rest of you, we're going to have to wait to find out what they really are.

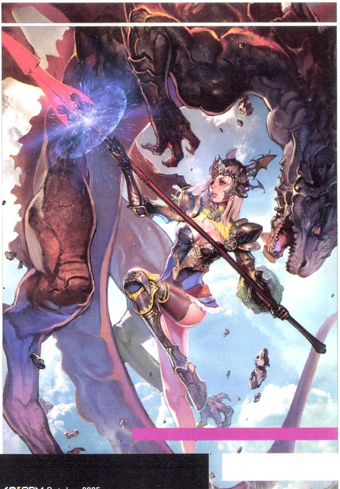
RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES

We may be totally wrong on this, but judging from the architecture and the emphasis on sunlight, it looks like the latest *Resident Evil* will take place in the Middle East. Could it be that Capcom wants to tie the game into recent events that have transpired in the region? It's so crazy that it might just work.



ENDLESS SAGA
REBIRTH OF THE CONSOLE MMORPG?

Despite its generic name, Webzen's project has the distinction of being not only one of the first RPGs revealed for the PlayStation 3, but also the first in what is sure to be a long line of MMORPGs. The trailer doesn't contain anything representative of gameplay, but it still shows quite an impressive display of visual effects. The shadows cast by the trees and other objects in the environment look quite good, and the character model is pretty impressive. We'd like to see if Webzen can maintain that level of detail in a true MMORPG setting.

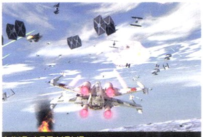


IF ENDLESS SAGA IS A MMORPG, WHERE'S SONY'S ONLINE STUFF?

That's a good question. Sony's still being pretty tight-lipped on its whole online strategy, and for good reason—it got trounced by Microsoft's Xbox Live service. Because of this, Sony's been forced to reexamine its online strategy. Interestingly enough, it seems like Sony still plans to go with an open network system, in which developers use their own servers or services, but it might have a little more involvement as to what services are being used.

LAIR
THE BATMAN-LESS KIND

Given Factor 5's amazing programming feats on the GameCube, just about everyone is looking forward to what the team can conjure up using the PlayStation 3 hardware. Factor 5 had a chance to show a brief trailer of its project, *Lair*, which shows an amazingly detailed dragon just before it takes flight. Once it's in the air, the camera pans over to the back of the dragon to reveal that it's actually flying alongside dozens of other dragons. While the graphics are pretty amazing on a purely technical level, the animation still needs some work. However, we can't say that makes us any less excited about the prospect of Factor 5 working on a PS3 game.



WHO ARE YOU?

Factor 5 is probably best known for its *Star Wars* work, particularly the *Star Wars Rogue Squadron* games for the Nintendo 64 and GameCube, but the company has actually been around much longer than that. In fact, it's developed games for the Super Nintendo, Genesis, Game Boy, and Amiga. Maybe you've heard of *Turrican*? You haven't? Well, too bad! Let's just hope that *Lair* doesn't become simply a *Rogue Squadron* with dragons.

OTHER PS3 GAMES AT PLAYSTATION MEETING 2005

GENJI

Game Republic is already working on a sequel to its *Onimusha*-inspired hack-n-slash adventure game. The trailer revealed at the show was all CG.

GUNDAM

Bandai actually showed a *Gundam* PS3 demo running in real time. It didn't look all that different from what was shown at E3, but it's still impressive stuff.

GUAN YU TECH DEMO

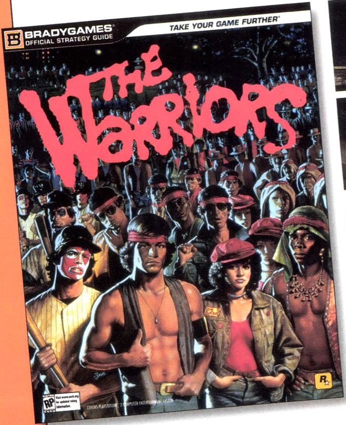
Koei's tech demo featured Guan Yu from *Dynasty Warriors* battling several enemies and highlighted how much detail the PS3 is capable of displaying. Koei maintains that it has no plans to make a *Dynasty Warriors* game for the PlayStation 3 at the moment.

PROJECT FORCE

Big robots with big guns. Yes, you guessed it: A mech-combat game is in development at From Software.

The armies of the night number 60,000 strong,

and tonight…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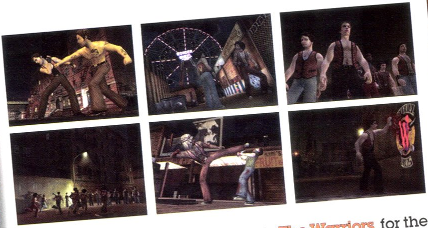

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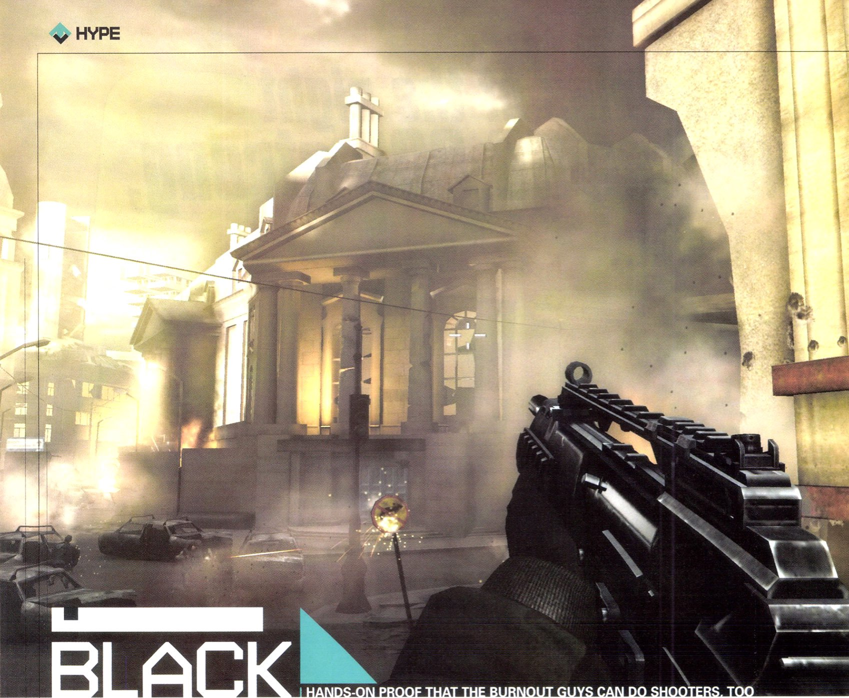


BLACK

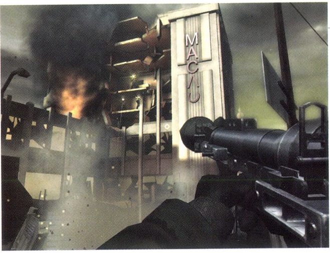
HANDS-ON PROOF THAT THE BURNOUT GUYS CAN DO SHOOTERS, TOO

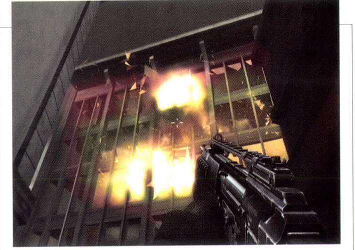
"We want to give you the feeling of what it's like to be shot at," Criterion's Alex Ward tells me with a cheeky grin before I'm ushered into a darkened room at Electronic Arts' Redwood City campus. The demo I'm about to play is apparently from "somewhere in the middle" of the game, but that's all I'm told. Criterion isn't ready to get too specific yet, as the group's primary focus is on getting *Burnout Revenge* out the door. "We can't tell you the story yet," I'm told, "and don't ask about too many specifics—we're just not sure yet." The purpose of this hands-on demo is purely visceral.

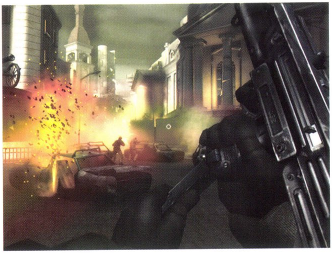
I start in a tiny room, windows to my right and a door directly in front of me. Two seconds later, before I've got a handle on what's going on or figured out if the control scheme is set up the way I like it, stuff starts exploding. Windows shatter into thousands of pieces, bullets tear into the walls, and there are sparks everywhere. A box on the floor flies across the room, stuff starts to break, and there's the relentless sound of gunfire. There's no music, no pleasantries, just the loud crackle of automatic weaponry. "Crouch!" someone yells. Not in the game, but in real life. The guy from Criterion is looking at me like I'm nuts. "How the hell do I do that?" I shout back, suddenly afflicted with that desperate inability to play videogames that often occurs when thrust into an unfamiliar experience. I edge forward and fiddle with buttons. By some fluke, I drop down just as a series of bullet holes spatters across the door in front of me. The wood splinters convincingly, and it's blatantly obvious that there's a bad guy on the other side of the door with a very big gun. What the hell…I click off a few rounds from my pistol directly at the door, run forward, wait for a pause in his fire, and then burst through. The guy drops and now I'm out in the open.

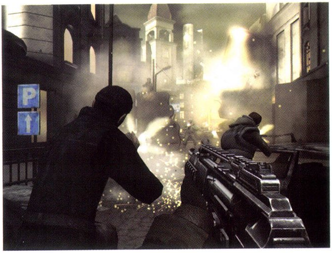
WINDOWS SHATTER INTO THOUSANDS OF PIECES.

Looking across the street, I can see a guy ducking down behind a smoking wreck of a car, but the shots that are pinging off the wall near my right shoulder are apparently coming from somewhere else. I grab the dead guy's AK-47, duck back into the room, and pause to catch my breath. Sheepishly sticking my nose out, I squeeze off a few rounds in the general direction of the car, and somehow I score another kill. My other assailant is above me to the left, but I can't really see him. I can see the tracer from his shots, though, so I point the machine gun in his general direction and unload an entire clip. Nothing. "Try the pistol, it's more accurate," says Criterion's









BLACK: THE GOAL

"We set out with the goal of making something that's not just a throwaway shooter," Jeremy Chubb, *Black*'s producer told us. "We don't want this to be a really simple game, we want it to be something that you want to return to again and again. We want people shooting the environment, and we really don't want them just charging around like nutters with guns. We want them to have to think about what they're doing.

"We've had enough of covert gameplay. We've seen a lot of games in this genre, and when you say a game is about black operations [people] immediately make assumptions about stealth, and squads, and tactics. We just want to put you in the world and give you a gun. The only covert thing in this game is that you kill everyone, so there's never anyone left to know that you were there in the first place."

chuckling representative. I switch weapons, poke my head out, and the ensuing spray of bullets forces me back into hiding again. Deep breath, peep out, hit the zoom button on the trigger, and squeeze a single shot at the guy's head. Down he goes. Ha! Take that.

Argh! More gunfire is coming from the right, but I can't see anything through all the smoke. I see an alley across the street, and there's a conveniently placed dumpster that I can duck down behind for a quick breather. Reaching there fairly unscathed, I can see that my health bar is divided into three separate chunks. I've taken damage, but now I'm out of harm's way and my health is regenerating *Halo*-style. I stand up and peep around the corner. Wait. Where are those shots coming from? Bullets are hitting the masonry near my head, and there's dust everywhere. Those shots came from behind me!

Ignoring the guys in the street, I duck back down behind the dumpster, switch to the AK, make sure I have a fresh clip, wait for a break in the firing, and stand up to blast randomly down the narrow alley. In the split second that I'm standing, I can see two bad guys. I pop up again, and by some fluke I whack the first guy straight in the face, hide again, and notice that I've been holding my breath. This isn't one of those shooters in which you can just wade in and start blasting at stuff. You move slowly, purposefully, and you have to get a feel for where the bad guys are with just the quickest of glances.

For the a moment it's remarkably quiet, but as I move to the end of the alley, the action resumes with shocking intensity. Gunfire, explosions, junk flying everywhere, and suddenly I'm aware of voices shouting instructions in the distance. Apparently, I have buddies helping me out. I'm no lone soldier, I'm part of a squad, and as far as I can tell, they're kicking considerably more ass than I am. I try to poke my head out of the alley to see what's going on, but it's very quickly shot at, and I lose one of my three blocks of health. My second block is nearly empty too, so I run for cover and try to work out who was shooting at me.

And so it continues. When we first saw *Black* in action back at E3, the only concerns raised were whether Criterion could maintain the tension and the ferocity of the experience through the typical duration that it takes to play through a game of this nature. Sure, the spectacle of all that...stuff...happening is jaw dropping, but there was always the worry that it would just be emotionally exhausting. Although this look at the game was only the briefest of experiences, it's clear that *Black*'s pacing is dictated by the way it forces you to carefully pick your way through each encounter as you methodically work forward. « *John Davison*

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** Criterion **Release** Q1 2006

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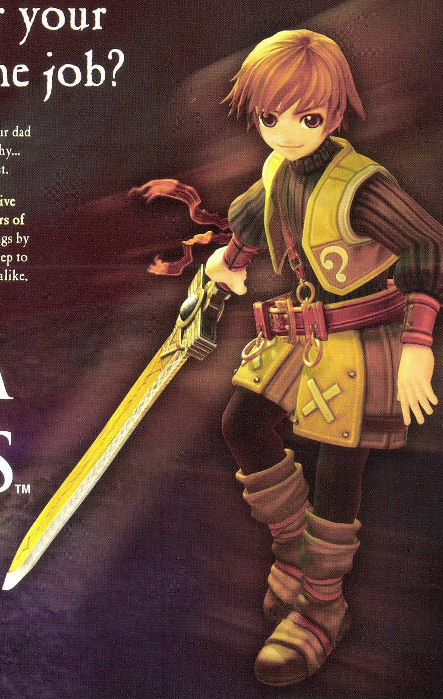

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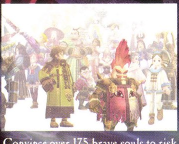

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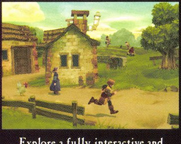

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Fantasy Violence
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Suggestive Themes
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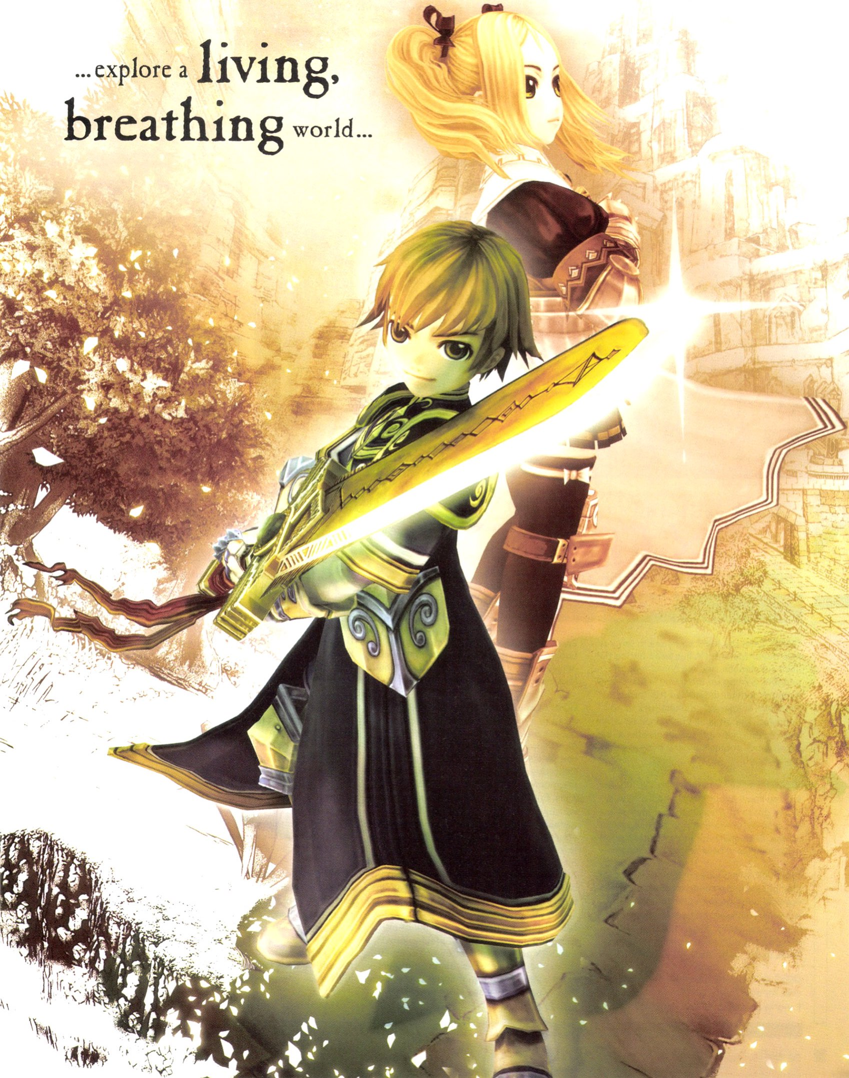

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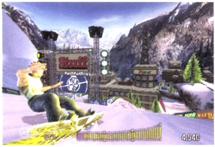
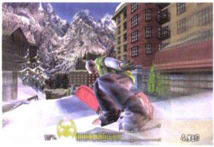




30 MINUTES WITH...

SSX ON TOUR

ROCK 'N' ROLL BOARDING SCHOOL

00:00 What the hell? Someone in the interface department at EA has been hitting the illicit substances, and we get to reap the benefits. Setting up the game is like taking a methamphetamine-fueled trip through Napoleon Dynamite's darkest rock 'n' roll fantasies. The art is all stark black on white, like marker on a high-school notebook, but it's all much cooler than any of us were in high school.

00:03 If you've been following *On Tour* at all, you know about this big addition: skis. We've got to try them out. After choosing our ride, we're taken to the character-select screen. Each character has a bizarre icon. We pick the unicorn because we like unicorns.

00:07 OK, this is way cool: While the race is loading, we're treated to more animated line-drawing oddities, but in the middle of the screen is a silhouette of a skier. Once loading is complete, we hit X, and the silhouette is filled in with our character as the interface fades to the game itself. It's a neat effect.

00:10 An EA game using the right analog stick for advanced maneuvers? Shocking! It works as well in *SSX* as in any of the EA Sports games: Once you charge up your boost bar, you move around the right stick while in the air to pull off some truly ridiculous tricks.

00:15 After winning the initial race, we're taken to a map of the mountain and told to choose the next event. Among the events: Size Matters, in which you need to get a certain distance ahead of your opponent; Collection Agency, where you roam across the mountain hunting down "Skulvis" (like Elvis, but less skin); Rail the Distance, in which you need to ride the rails for a set distance; Trick-Off, where you must build your trick score until it's a specified amount more than your opponent's (who's also building up his trick score, of course); and Airtime Anonymous, where you have to build up 30 seconds of air time in two minutes. We start off with Trick-Off.

00:16 Hmm. By busting out a few of our tricks honed from years of playing previous *SSX* games, we destroy our competitor in about 15 seconds, demolishing his score over the course of about two (maybe three) jumps. Let's see what the other events are like.

00:20 Size Matters is similar to Trick-Off in that all we need to do is get a certain distance ahead of our opponent. He takes a tumble early in the event, and we coast to an easy victory. Too easy. The skis do feel somewhat different than a snowboard, but the trick system is the same and it's an easy adjustment.

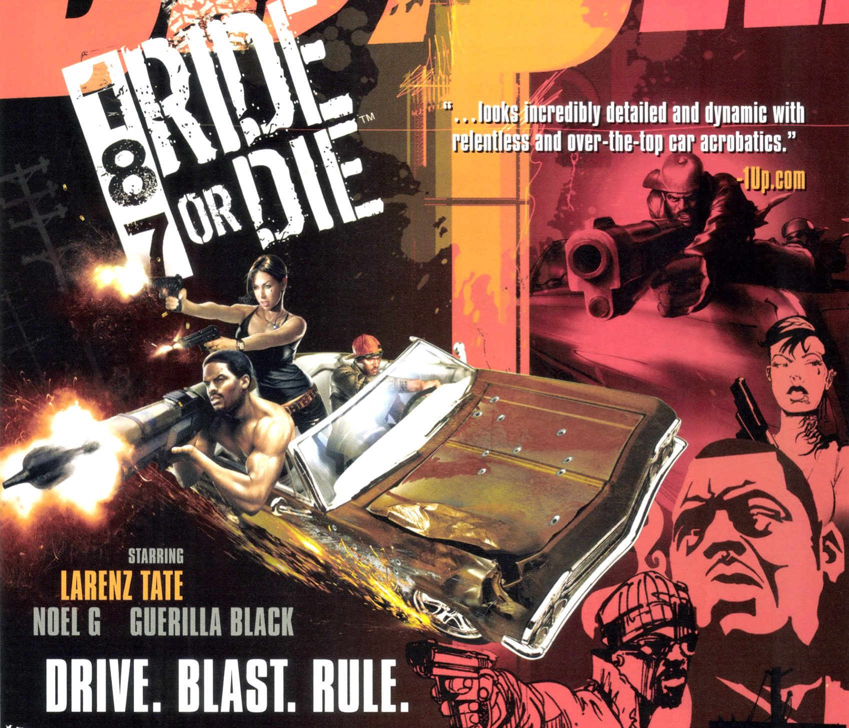
00:23 Ah, this is more like it. After winning all those events, new options open up on the map, including Double Slopestyle, a two-round competition that brings all those sweet, sweet *SSX* memories flooding back. The goal is simple: tricks, tricks, and more tricks. Rack up that score; you've got a whole mountain to do it on.

00:30 Being only a demo version, this disc doesn't have much more to offer us. We can't check out the gear shop, the clothing shop, or the barbershop—all are locked in this demo. But we're impressed by the game's shockingly different style and the new takes on the old standby events... though we hope to see a bit more challenge in the final game. «

Pub. EA Sports Big **Dev.** EA Canada **Release** October

PORTABLE MOUNTAIN

From the little time we've spent with the PSP version of *On Tour*, we can tell you that it looks awesome but that the handling and framerate need some pretty hefty improvement. Will that happen? Stay tuned for our updated hands-on impressions next month.



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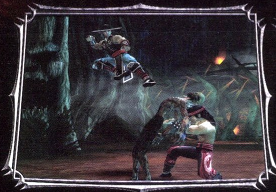

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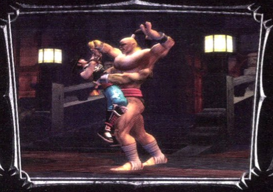

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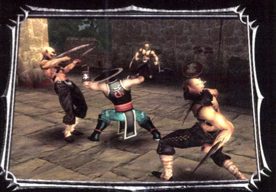

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MARVEL'S NEXT STEPS IN WORLD DOMINATION

Long ago, just as comic book movies were limited to abominations like *Swamp Thing* and the Italian-made *Captain America* movie, comic book games were stuck with the likes of *Superman 64*. So it's nice to see movies and games based on comics finally take a turn for the better. Here's a look at how Marvel is keeping up that momentum by getting its characters off of the page.

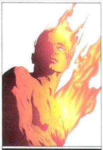
MARVEL NEMESIS: RISE OF THE IMPERFECTS

Pub. EA Games **Dev.** EA Games **Release** September

EA's attempt to make a brawling game featuring the Marvel dudes versus a cast of ne'er-do-wells is interesting because it's an example of EA trying to do something new with the Marvel universe instead of making another sequel or movie-based game. On top of the new gameplay, EA is trying to use the Marvel character library to bolster the overall game. So while we could write here about how EA tapped Marvel to generate a new set of villains for the established heroes to fight or about how the game plays kind of like *Power Stone* with spandex, we'll focus on what people really want to know: Who's going to fight? Here's a rundown of the whole roster, both Marvel and Imperfect characters.

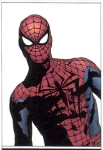
POCKET-SIZED MARVELS

The PSP version of the game will include two exclusive Marvel characters: Captain America and Doctor Doom (who is the greatest villain in the history of comics and was the visual basis for Darth Vader).



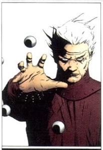
HUMAN TORCH

We're assuming that Johnny Storm can zip around in the air and shoot fire. But since he's young and not very mighty, he probably can only take a couple punches before going down. He most likely feels like Spidey, but with proper flight.



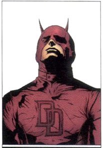
SPIDER-MAN

As expected, he's a spry dude; while he might not have the punching power of these other folks, he can easily jump around and smack his opponent rapidly. He can also websling around the arena and shoot web gunk at his opponent.



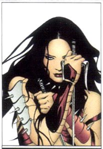
MAGNETO

The most powerful mutant in the world (he's considered the master of the physical while Xavier is the master of the mental), so it will be interesting to see how he plays out. He probably possesses flight, and most likely can manipulate objects remotely.



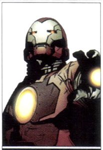
DAREDEVIL

This is one of the odder choices. Daredevil might be blind, but he's one heck of a brawler. We know that he can use his billy club as a weapon and as a way to swing around the stage like Spider-Man. So he probably has a similar feel to Spidey.



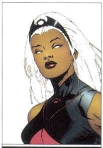
ELEKTRA

She's an awesome ninja assassin. She probably has no real powers, but she does have plenty of throws and moves, and she likely throws her sai as a projectile weapon or somesuch. And in case you forgot, let us repeat: She's a female ninja.



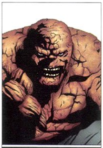
IRON MAN

Tony Stark is one of the more powerful people in the lineup. He's got flight, tough armor, superstrength, and repulsor rays. His array of technology probably makes him the one real challenge to Magneto, gameplaywise.



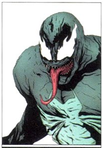
STORM

Like the Human Torch, she's a flier who can use ranged attacks (her lightning). Also, even though Storm is very regal and uses pretty slick powers, she grew up on the dirty streets as a thief, so she's probably a decent brawler to boot.



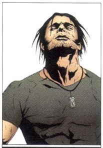
THING

He's the only pure strongman who's been revealed in the Marvel lineup. We're assuming that he'll be the easiest to play as, since he'll just run around and punch a lot or something. The best strategy when fighting him is probably to just avoid him.



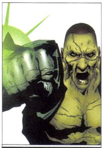
VENOM

Think of him as a heftier Spidey. He's got a similar move set (webslinging, webshooting), but, well, he's bigger. And has more drool. And talks in the plural third person. And is apparently not in the upcoming *Spider-Man 3* movie. Curses!



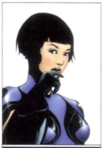
WOLVERINE

You can always bet on Wolverine to make a game appearance, since he also manages to find his way into almost every Marvel comic every month. He has no ranged attacks but has pretty vicious melee damage, thanks to his adamantium claws.



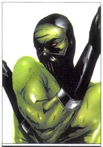
BRIGADE

This is what happens when you try to combine several soldiers into some sort of cybernetic supersoldier. Brigade has superstrength and can fire energy bolts from his arms, so he's kind of like the Thing with guns or Iron Man without the flying.



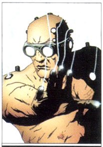
FAULTZONE

She was a Russian ballerina until she got smashed up by a car and became a quadriplegic. So, of course, she's bitter about the loss of her legs, until the aliens gave her new cybernetic legs with earthquake-creating gizmos built in.



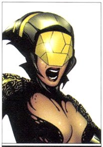
HAZMAT

He looks like Wolverine if he accidentally fell into a vat of green goo. Apparently, he was some science dude who was studying various vaccinations, injected himself with all of the experimental medicine, and is now some supertoxic guy.



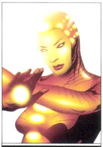
JOHNNY OHM

Call him "electric prison dude." This Imperfect was an ex-con before he received the power to control electricity. He probably has a power set similar to Storm's, and he's also able to fly by riding waves of electricity around the arena.



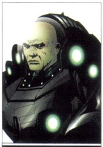
PARAGON

Paragon was deemed the perfect human warrior and was then kidnapped by the aliens and enhanced. Her body is considered peak human (kinda like Captain America), and she's got all kinds of neural programming in her head.



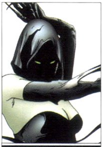
SOLARA

She seems to be the female Human Torch for the Imperfects. Her backstory explains how she was a daughter of a yakuza and became a scientist who can survive crazy fire accidents, and so the aliens decided to make her an energy flier/shooter.



VANS ROEKEL

He's the main (alien) man behind the Imperfects. (They're called that because each was an imperfect result, until he made Paragon.) Afterward, he went for the Iron Man style of fighting and made himself an alien suit that gave him powers.



THE WINK

She's a disfigured escape artist with the most unique power in the game: teleportation. There's no teleporter on the Marvel side (Nightcrawler is probably busy at church), so any Marvel character will have a tough time getting a bead on her.

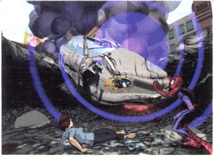
X-MEN LEGENDS II: RISE OF APOCALYPSE

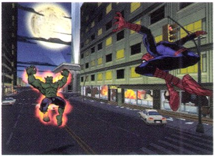
X-Men Legends is a solid game that was enhanced by excellent use of the extensive *X-Men* lore, and so it's not much of a surprise that *X-Men Legends II* builds upon that formula. Basically, imagine the previous game, but bigger. There are more controllable mutants (X-Men and Brotherhood members alike), more combos and powers, more enemies, more levels—just more, more, more.

X-Men Legends II is also streamlined a bit from its predecessor; it's easier to select and use your powers without going into a menu screen, and nonmicromanagers can use the autolevel feature to smartly improve their mutant party. Boss battles have also been revamped; for example, there's a three-tiered bout against Archangel. You can't just unload all of your powers on him; you need to use teamwork to fight him hand to hand, then get him when he's using a teleporter, and then take him down once the teleporter is destroyed. Additionally, there will be a PSP version of the game with some exclusive characters for portable playing.

If *Marvel Nemesis* is an attempt at creating a new game using classic characters, *X-Men Legends II* refines a proven formula and adds even more classic characters.

Pub. Activision **Dev.** Raven **Release** September





PICTURE
START

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN

Also in the Marvel lineup is *Ultimate Spider-Man*, which is an example of both a developer trying to improve on its past success (à la *X-Men Legends II*) and a comic publisher becoming greatly involved in the process (even more so than Marvel creating characters for *Marvel Nemesis*). While Treyarch is working on making the basic free-roaming webslinging gameplay better, Marvel had the creative team of the *Ultimate Spider-Man* series (writer Brian Michael Bendis and artist Mark Bagley) actively participate in development—Bendis is writing all the dialogue, while Bagley is providing all the non-game-generated art. For the fans, that means this game takes place totally within the story continuity (though it's stand-alone enough for people who haven't picked up the book), and it even introduces new characters to the *Ultimate* universe (for example, Ultimate Silver Sable shows up in the game first, and a month or so later, she'll be in the comic series). Yes, this is an example of that ugly word "synergy," as both the game and the comic series perfectly complement each other and maintain a feel that should be consistent with what fans of the franchise expect.

Pub. Activision **Dev.** Treyarch **Release** September

BEYOND THE PRESENT

RUMORS AND CHATTER ABOUT WHAT'S DOWN THE ROAD

There's been a persistent rumor about an upcoming *Iron Man* game, with Internet chatter claiming that Z-Axis, the folks behind the *Dave Mirra* and *BMX XXX* titles, will be handling Shellhead's game. We haven't been able to confirm anything, but we'd like to think that *Iron Man* will be a PS3 game—if any Marvel character is a poster child for next-generation tech, it's Tony Stark. Heck, David Jaffe admitted at a San Diego Comic-Con panel that he's wanted to make an *Iron Man* game for years. Let him go for it!

Also unconfirmed, but with a total "yeah, duh" answer, is a game based on next year's *X3* movie. Given the success of *X-Men Legends*, perhaps the *X3* game will also be an RPG.

Don't think that the fellows at the Distinguished Competition are sitting around counting their AOL money. In fact, Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment just announced that it's doing a *Justice League of America* game (starring Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, Flash, Martian Manhunter, and Zatanna) scheduled for fall 2006. Warner hasn't even named the developer, but that ubiquitous Internet chatter has mentioned Snowblind (*Champions of Norrath*) as the possible team.

There is also a rumor that EA Tiburon (the *Madden* folks) is working on a game for *Superman Returns*—based on the buzz a snippet of *Superman Returns* movie footage garnered during this year's San Diego Comic-Con, this game will automatically be big.

NINJA 101

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BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 10

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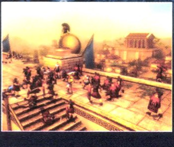
XBOX

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

TOTAL WARRIOR



MATURE 17+

M

Blood
Violence

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

PlayStation 2

the CREATIVE ASSEMBLY

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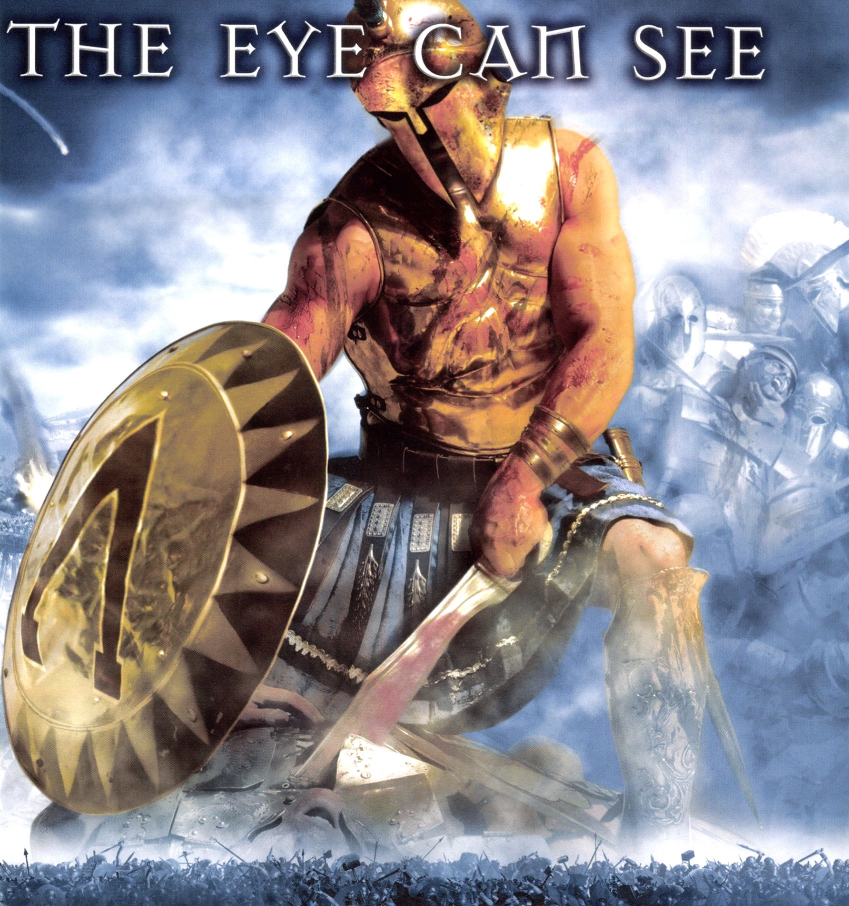

You are the Total Warrior. An orphan, raised by the Spartans to fight, chosen by the gods to win, you must prove your worth in the most epic battles ever seen on console.

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Burnout Revenge
OPM PREVIEW: Criterion's bringing you a new hunk of burnout love.
Win a PSP & a PSP Game!
WIN A PSP: Only a few da
to enter!
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Resident Evil Film Trilogy?
RUMOR MILL: But the last movie was so terrible...
PSP + Xbox 360 = Love
CONNECT: Microsoft wasn't lying when they said they'd work together
Commander of Code Age Speaks
SPOTLIGHT: Tom Hall
Gotham Racing Gets Geometric
Ridge Racer Heads Online
Dawn of a New Age
Business is Booming - China Cracks
The Lockdown is in Force

PSP 2.0

FIRMWARE UPDATE BRINGS BIG CHANGES

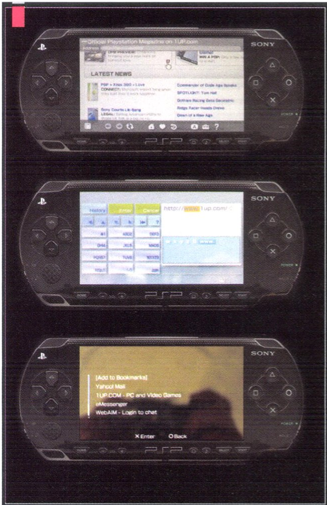
On August 12, Sony released the newest and most significant update to the PSP's functionality yet. Firmware version 2.0 adds a wide selection of options, tweaks, and features.

The most significant new feature is the addition of an Internet browser. Far from the ultrasimplistic browser that home users put together by using the online update function of *Wipeout Pure*, this new browser is slick, fast, and surprisingly full featured.

The other major change is the addition of themes. Rather than passively watching the PSP menu's background color change from month to month, users will now have the option of setting the color themselves; those who don't like plain colors can even choose one of their own photos as wallpaper.

A diverse assortment of other improvements has been made, which you'll find outlined below. But perhaps the most significant is the closing of various security loopholes. The burgeoning community of PSP homebrew artists—techies who design or divine ways to make the system run unsanctioned software—are looking at this tightening of security as a slap in the face, as it renders all their efforts on the previous firmware obsolete. But the PSP is a powerful, versatile system...so it's just a matter of time before someone figures out how to teach this particular dog some new tricks. «

> THIS NEW BROWSER IS SLICK AND FAST.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eMessenger
WebAIM - Login to chat

HOW TO UPGRADE

If you have access to a wireless hot spot, upgrading is as simple as choosing "network update" from your PSP's Settings menu and following the directions. If not, you'll either need a PC and a USB-to-Mini USB cable, or you'll need to buy a new game with the update preloaded. Visit www.us.playstation.com/psp.aspx?id=softwareupdate for details specific to your situation.

INSIDE THE BROWSER

The PSP's new Internet browser is almost startling in its robustness. Not only does it support browser standards like bookmarks, cookies, and history, but it actually features tabbed browsing—something Internet Explorer hasn't even gotten around to yet. Granted, it only allows three tabs to be open at once, but it's the thought that counts.

Other notable browser features include the ability to adjust text size and language encoding; delete cookies, history, cache, and passwords; and manage the way pages are displayed onscreen. This last feature is most interesting: You can view pages in their native size, scale them to fit the width of the PSP screen, or use a feature called "smart-fit," which displays all the page elements in full resolution but reorders them so that as little stretches beyond the screen as possible.

And if you're wondering how you could possibly enter a complex URL with no keyboard, fear not—another new feature is an additional input mode for the virtual keypad, which presents commonly used Internet strings (like "http://" and ".com") as single letters.

2.0 DISSECTED

You're just burning to know about every single update in the 2.0 firmware, aren't you? Now you can.

Network

- Internet browser added
- Infrastructure mode settings revised for ease of use
- WPA-PSK (TKIP) security option added

Video

- "Go to" command added (UMD only)
- "A-B repeat" (i.e., loop) command added
- 4:3 screen mode added (Memory Stick only)
- Audio options added (Memory Stick only)
- AVC format now supported (Memory Stick only)

Audio

- MP4 (aka AAC) and WAV format now supported (Memory Stick only)

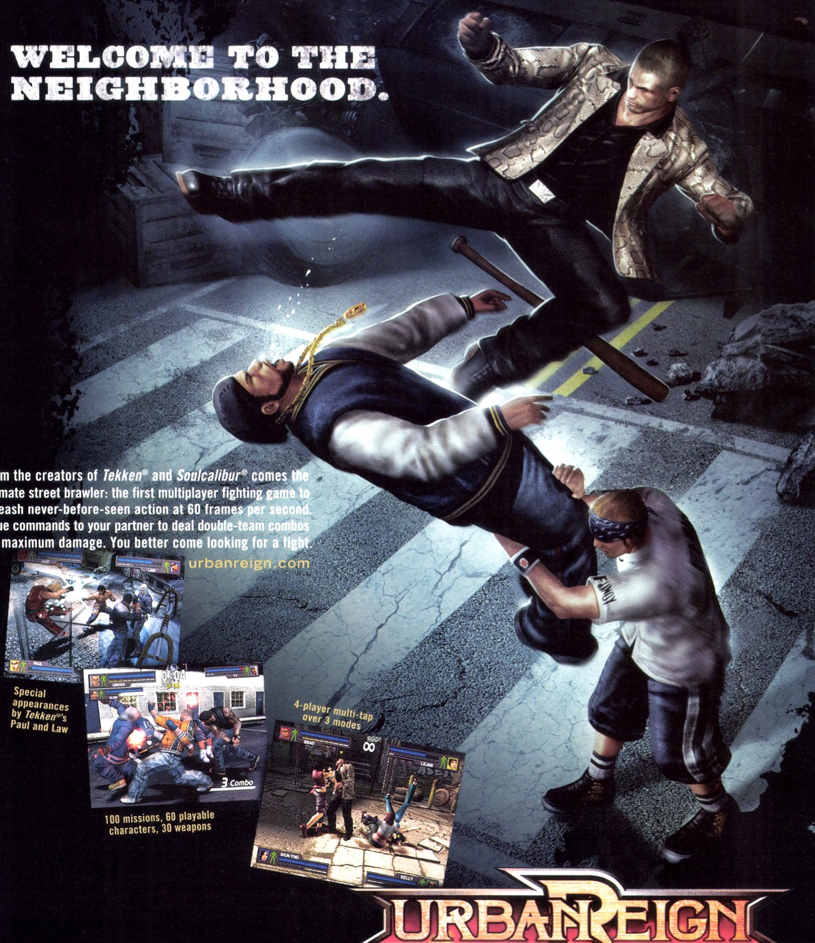
Photos

- Wireless image transfer feature added
- Wallpaper feature added
- TIFF, PNG, GIF, and BMP formats now supported

General

- Security strengthened
- Korean language added to system settings
- Character-set option added to system settings
- Input modes added to onscreen keyboard

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD.



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T
Mild Language
Violence
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PlayStation 2

namco®

COMING SEPTEMBER

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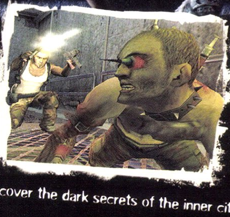
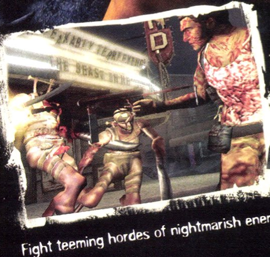
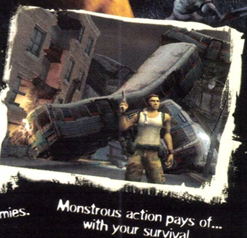
THE CITY HAS ITS DEMONS... BUT SO DO YOU.



Discover the dark secrets of the inner city.



Fight teeming hordes of nightmarish enemies.



Monstrous action pays of...
with your survival.

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MATURE 17+
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Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Sexual Themes
Strong Language
Use of Drugs

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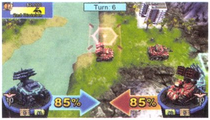
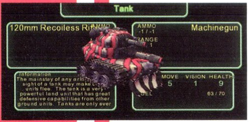
SURREAL

PlayStation®2




Tank

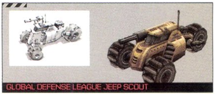
120mm Recoiless Rif

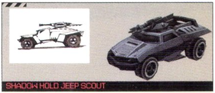
AMMO
-1 / -1
RANGE
1

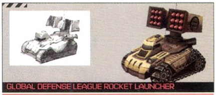
Machinegun

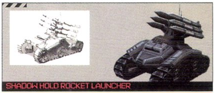
Information
The mainstay of any arm... sight of a tank may make ... units flee. The tank is a very powerful land unit that has great defensive capabilities from other ground units. Tanks are only ever

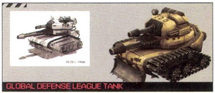
MOVE 5 VISION 1 HEALTH 9
FUEL 63 / 70

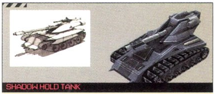

GLOBAL DEFENSE LEAGUE JEEP SCOUT


SHADOW HOLD JEEP SCOUT


GLOBAL DEFENSE LEAGUE ROCKET LAUNCHER


SHADOW HOLD ROCKET LAUNCHER


GLOBAL DEFENSE LEAGUE TANK


SHADOW HOLD TANK

EXCLUSIVE

FIELD COMMANDER

ONE WAR ON TERROR TO GO, PLEASE

In 2001, Nintendo published *Advance Wars,* a turn-based strategy game for Game Boy Advance, to great acclaim. People found that its gameplay style was perfect for the portable platform, and *Advance Wars* went on to have the fourth-highest composite score for a GBA game on GameRankings.com. It also spawned a popular sequel on GBA, and the series will debut on both the GameCube and the DS this fall.

In light of this success, it's not terribly surprising that Sony Online has decided to try its own hand at the genre, bringing turn-based strategy to the PSP in its new game *Field Commander.*

As part of the Global Defense League (the good guys), you'll be facing off against the Shadow Hold, an appropriately shady group of dudes whose hobbies include dealing illegal arms, starting wars, and committing assorted acts of terrorism. Details on the units have yet to be announced, but we can tell you that there will be 15 unit types, including rocket launchers, jeeps, and tanks. You'll also have 11 commanding officers at your disposal. As you can see from the screens, all of this military goodness will be executed in glorious 3D for your viewing pleasure.

In single-player mode, the story campaign is composed of 30 different missions, or you can take on real-life opponents through head-to-head matches via Wi-Fi or the Internet. The team also plans to include a mission designer; once you've perfected your masterpieces, you'll be able to upload them to a central site and also download other people's creations, increasing replay value. «

> THE TEAM PLANS TO INCLUDE A MISSION DESIGNER.

Pub. Sony Online **Dev.** Sony Online **Release** Spring 2006

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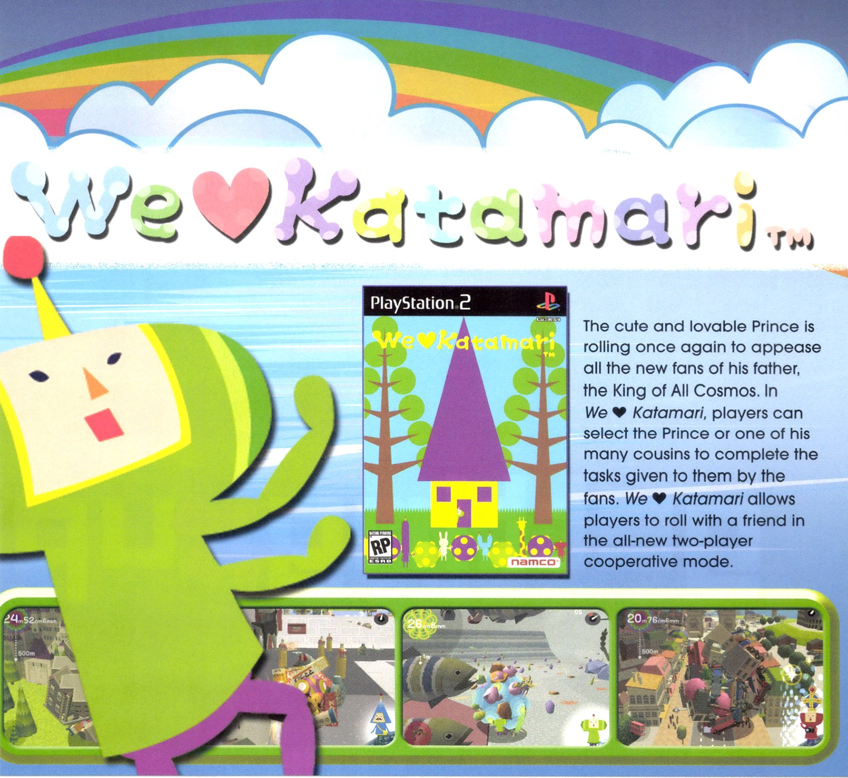
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PlayStation 2
We ♥ Katamari™
RATING PENDING
RP
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namco
24m52cm6mm
500m
26cm6mm
1m
20m76cm6mm
500m

The cute and lovable Prince is rolling once again to appease all the new fans of his father, the King of All Cosmos. In *We ♥ Katamari*, players can select the Prince or one of his many cousins to complete the tasks given to them by the fans. *We ♥ Katamari* allows players to roll with a friend in the all-new two-player cooperative mode.

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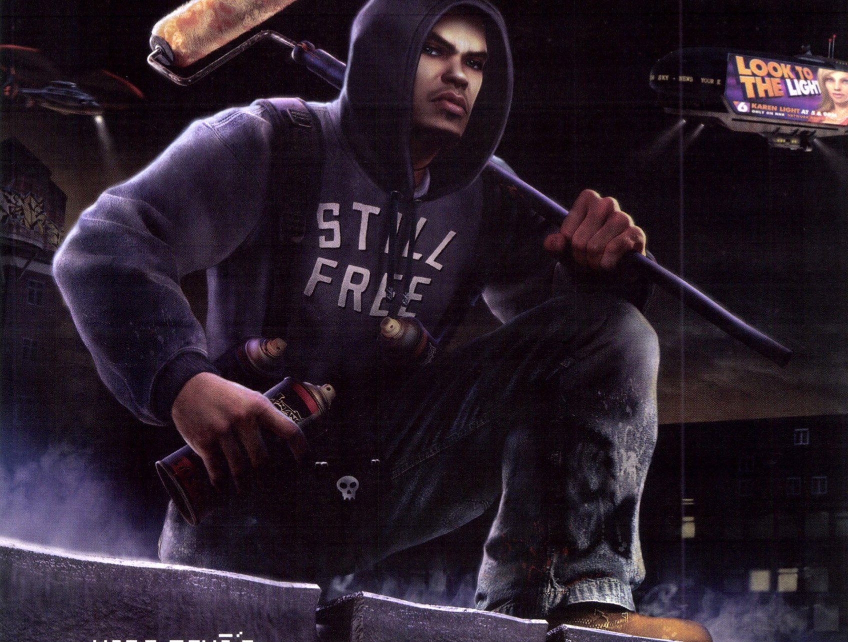

MARC ECKŌ'S

getting up

CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE

MARC ECKŌ PRESENTS GETTING UP: CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE

Written and Directed by MARC ECKŌ Developed by COLLECTIVE STUDIOS Music Direction by MARC ECKŌ and SEAN "P.DIDDY" COMBS Music by RJD2 THE RZA NOTORIOUS B.I.G. TALIB KWELI RAKIM SERJ of SYSTEM OF A DOWN and PHAROAHE MONCH Starring TALIB KWELI as TRANE ADAM WEST BRITTANY MURPHY CHARLIE MURPHY GEORGE HAMILTON GIOVANNI RIBISI ROSARIO DAWSON THE RZA SEAN "P.DIDDY" COMBS MICHAEL "MC SERCH" BERRIN and ANDY DICK as Beth

Featuring Graffiti Legends COPE2 SHEPARD FAIREY SEEN T-KID FUTURA SMITH and many more.

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mobile by glu

PlayStation.2

XBOX

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

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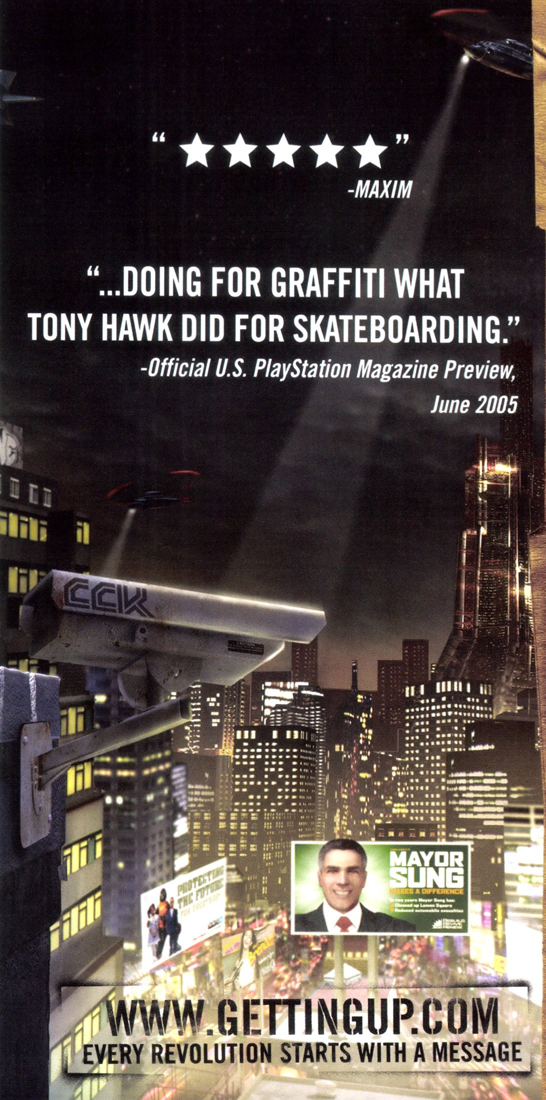
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MAKES A DIFFERENCE
PROTECTING THE FUTURE

"★★★★★"

-MAXIM

"...DOING FOR GRAFFITI WHAT TONY HAWK DID FOR SKATEBOARDING."

-Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine Preview, June 2005

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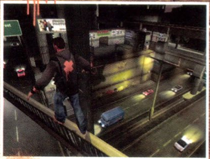
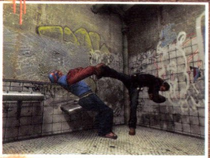
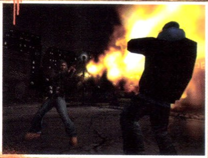


Death-Defying Urban Jungle Gym



Deadly Fighting & Vicious Attacks



Battle Enemies Using Makeshift Weapons

Learn From Real Graffiti Legends

ATARI

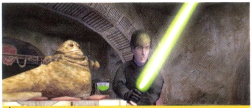
EXCLUSIVE

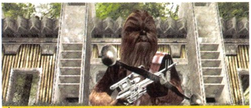
STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II

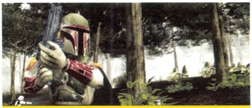
HERO WORSHIP

It's been only a year since LucasArts and developer Pandemic surprised us with the excellent team-based shooter *Star Wars Battlefront;* you'd think that wouldn't be enough time for them to pull off a real sequel. But Pandemic is not generally known for halfhearted efforts, and *Star Wars Battlefront II*—set to release November 1, the same date as the release of *Star Wars Episode III* on DVD—promises to be more than an update, with loads of new characters, weapons, and vehicles drawn from all six films.

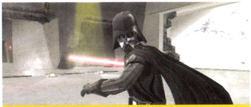
Battlefront fans may find the addition of a playable hero class—in both single- and multiplayer—especially nifty. By achieving certain objectives—such as securing the corridor of the *Tantive IV*—you'll unlock a hero (in the case of our example, ol' Darthy boy himself), basically a stronger version of the rank-and-file grunts, with special powers and weapons depending on who it is. Heroes

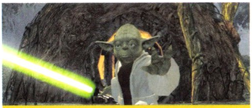

LUKE SKYWALKER


CHEWBACCA


BOBA FETT

LEIA ORGANA


DARTH VADER


YODA

HAN SOLO

EMPEROR PALPATINE

OBI-WAN KENOBI

SIZING UP THE HEROES IN BATTLEFRONT II

WHO THEY ARE AND WHY YOU'LL WANT TO PLAY AS THEM

Our Hero	Affiliation	Primary Attack A	Primary Attack B	Secondary Attack A	Secondary Attack B
Luke Skywalker	Alliance	Lightsaber	Saber Block	Saber Throw	Force Push
Leia Organa	Alliance	Sporting blaster	Thermal detonator	Invulnerability	None
Han Solo	Alliance	DL44 blaster	Fusion cutter	Detpack	Rally (Defense buff)
Chewbacca	Alliance	Bowcaster	Guided rocket	Time bomb	Rage
Darth Vader	Empire	Lightsaber	Saber Block	Saber Throw	Force Choke
Emperor Palpatine	Empire	Sidious' lightsaber	Saber Block	Force Lightning	Force Choke
Boba Fett	Empire	E-3 blaster rifle	Flamethrower	Wrist rocket	Detpack
Yoda	Republic	Yoda's lightsaber	Saber Block	Force Push	Force Pull
Obi-Wan Kenobi	Republic	Obi-Wan's lightsaber	Saber Block	Saber Throw	Force Push
Mace Windu	Republic	Lightsaber	Saber Block	Saber Throw	Force Push
Ki-Adi-Mundi	Republic	Lightsaber	Saber Block	Saber Throw	Force Pull
Aayla Secura	Republic	Aayla's lightsabers	Saber Block	Saber Throw	Force Pull
Anakin Skywalker	Republic	Anakin's lightsaber	Saber Block	Saber Throw	Force Push
General Grievous	Separatists	Grievous' sabers	Saber Block	Rage (Damage increase)	None
Darth Maul	Separatists	Double saber	Saber Block	Saber Throw	Force Push
Count Dooku	Separatists	Lightsaber	Saber Block	Force Lightning	Force Choke
Jango Fett	Separatists	Westar-34 blaster	Flamethrower	Wrist rocket	Time bomb

are temporary but can cause a great deal of damage if used wisely. And don't think a hero weak in the ways of the Force won't be as effective: Han Solo, for example, is especially accurate with a blaster, and Boba Fett has wrist rockets and a flamethrower in his arsenal.

There will be 17 total unlockable heroes in *Battlefront II*. About half of the single-player missions include heroes, while all the multiplayer maps include one per map per faction (see the chart). In case you're wondering, you cannot unlock entire armies of heroes. Each planet is allotted one hero per faction, so you can play as, say, Leia on the aforementioned *Tantive IV* but not on Yavin IV, because that's where Chewbacca is assigned. (LucasArts hints at an exception to this rule that will come in the form of a bonus map). «

Pub. LucasArts **Dev.** Pandemic **Release** November 1

PlayStation
Issue 98

PLAY IT

Watch for a playable demo of *Battlefront II* on the November *OPM* disc!

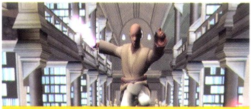
THE JEDI DIFFERENCE, OR USE THE FORCE, GRUNT!

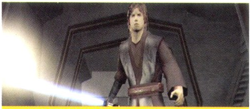
What's a *Star Wars* game without Jedi knights? Right, boring. Luckily, *Battlefront II* provides several ways for you to acquire your own midi-chlorianated warrior:

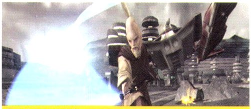
In the single-player game, the process of unlocking a Jedi follows the basic rules of the hero system: Achieve specific mission objectives—et voilà—you may find yourself with a Mace Windu or Ki-Adi-Mundi. In the more open-ended galactic conquest mode, you must win battles to gain special bonuses, one of these being a Jedi. In instant action, you can just pick a Jedi and go lightsaber crazy.

In multiplayer action, the game's host largely determines the use of Jedi characters, and there can be only one Jedi on the map per game at any given time. Becoming a Jedi can be by random selection or dependent upon the number of kills a player has (the most prolific killer gets to be the Jedi). The host can also give one Jedi to each team or limit them to a specific side. In the case of the latter, let's say the Empire gets the Jedi. If the Rebellion can kill that Jedi, it will then be able to spawn one for itself—leaving the Empire Jedi-less.

The Jedi come equipped with the usual variety of Force powers: Push, Run, Choke, Jump, Pull, Lightning, and Lightsaber Throw, as well as a few specific moves for certain Jedi. They can also block blaster fire. Force energy can be depleted, but it regenerates over time.


MACE WINDU


ANAKIN SKYWALKER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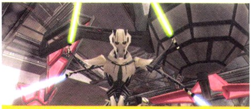
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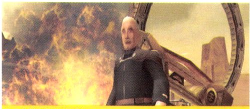
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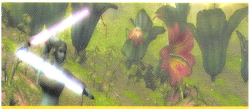
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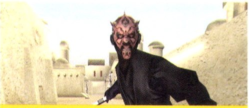
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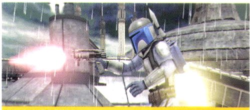
JANGO FETT

Where You'll Find Them	Why You'll Want Them
Jedi Temple, Mygeeto, Jabba's Palace, Death Star interior	For the Jedi in general, Saber Block protects against attacks. Saber Throw can strike multiple enemies, and Force Push knocks opponents back.
Tantive IV, Theed	Blaster shots pass through multiple opponents—and our hearts.
Utapau, Polis Massa	Blaster fires a burst of three quick shots. Han is also an especially accurate shot, which goes a long way toward counteracting opponents' Force powers.
Kashyyyk, Felucia, Yavin	He's tougher than the standard Wookiee, and his Rage ability causes increased damage.
Tantive IV, Jedi temple, Dagobah, Theed	Force Choke immobilizes and damages a single enemy. His presence scares the bejesus out of just about everyone. Just ask Admiral Ozzel.
Polis Massa, Theed, Death Star interior	He does this awesome jump in which he pounds the ground and sends lightning everywhere—a powerful multienemy attack.
Kashyyyk, Utapau, Mygeeto, Felucia, Yavin, Jabba's palace	Pistol fires rapidly and does extra damage.
Kashyyyk, *Tantive IV*, Polis Massa, Dagobah	Small and agile and difficult to hit, Yoda is. His Force Pull can draw an enemy into close range for a follow-up saber attack.
Utapau, Mustafar, Theed	His greatest power: survival.
Jedi temple, Yavin, Death Star interior	Because we never actually saw him die!
Mygeeto	Come on, he looks like a conehead.
Felucia, Jabba's palace	Wields two lightsabers simultaneously.
Mustafar	Single-handedly killed all those Jedi and Sand People—and he built C-3PO!
Tantive IV, Utapau, Polis Massa, Dagobah, Mygeeto	Combo and dash attacks use his four lightsabers. His Rage ability increases enemy damage.
Jedi temple, Mustafar, Jabba's palace	The double saber—what more needs to be said?
Geonosis	Dooku and the Emperor can target multiple opponents at once with powerful Force Lightning.
Kashyyyk, Felucia, Yavin	Rifle fires three-shot bursts.

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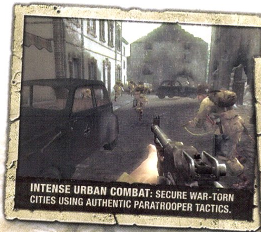
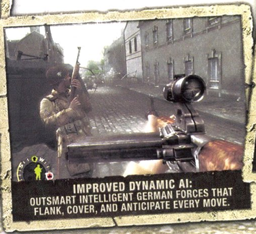
I've been out of Baker's shadow for no more than three days now and already I'm feeling the weight of my fear. The fear that around every corner somebody's lying in wait. The fear that any wrong choice could end up killing what I'm trying to save. Well, somebody's got to lead this fight. And if I call this right, my men — the men who have fought next to me — will get out of this hell alive.

Red
6/16



INTENSE URBAN COMBAT: SECURE WAR-TORN CITIES USING AUTHENTIC PARATROOPER TACTICS.



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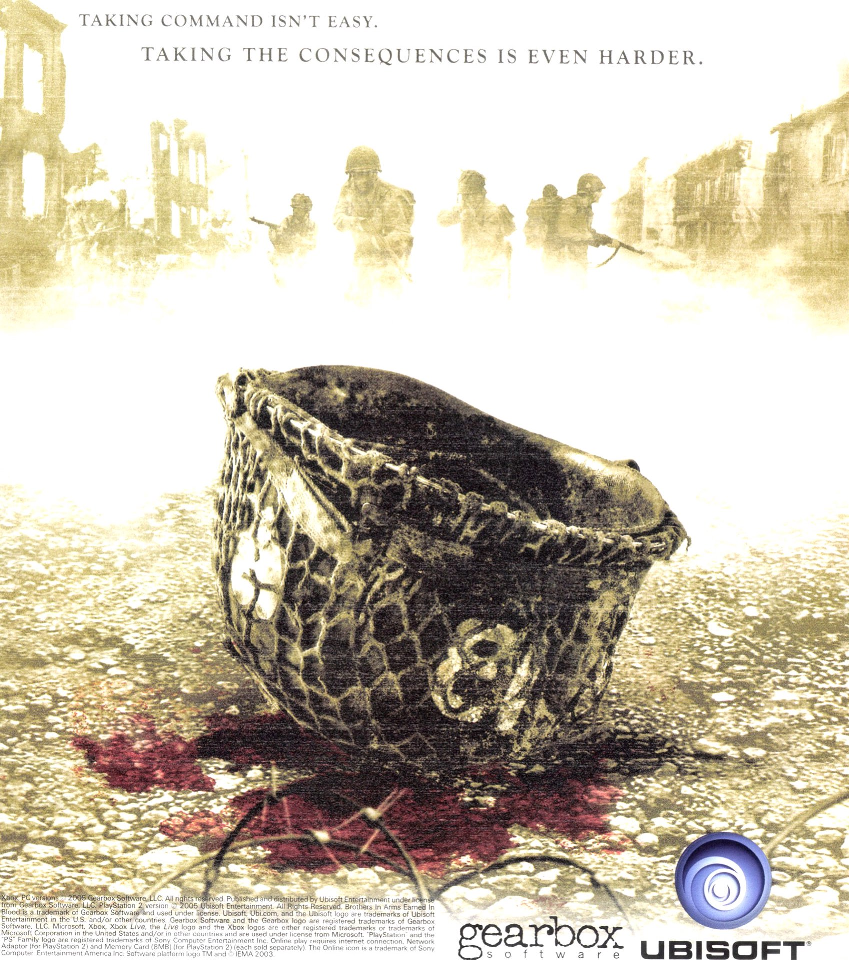
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TAKING THE CONSEQUENCES IS EVEN HARDER.
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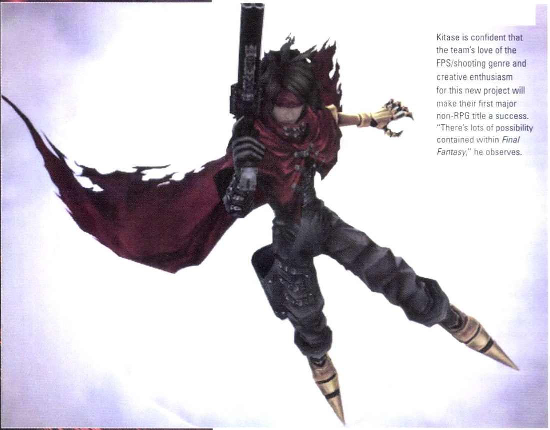
IT'S HIP TO BE SQUARE ENIX

RPG PIONEER ALLOWS HANDS-ON AT TOKYO CONFERENCE

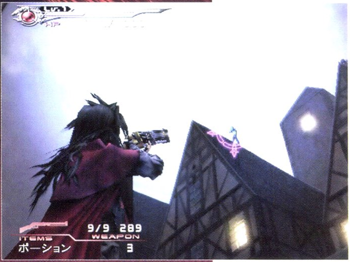
It's a final fantasy of sorts come true. At an August editors' event in steaming Tokyo, our man in Japan, Andrew Vestal, was allowed some serious hands-on time with the three biggest Square Enix games currently in development: *Dirge of Cerberus*, *Final Fantasy XII*, and *Kingdom Hearts II*. He also had the rare opportunity to speak to *FFVII* creator Yoshinori Kitase, and it looks like 2006 is shaping up to be a good year for *FF* fans.

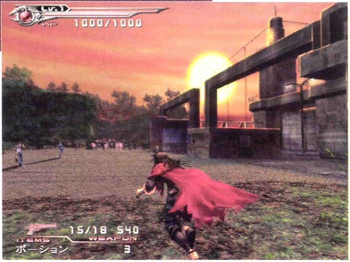
DIRGE OF CERBERUS: FINAL FANTASY VII

THE FF SERIES TAKES A "GUN-ACTION" TURN



Kitase is confident that the team's love of the FPS/shooting genre and creative enthusiasm for this new project will make their first major non-RPG title a success. "There's lots of possibility contained within *Final Fantasy*," he observes.





ケット・シー：せやけど、ヴィンセントはんは優しいわぁ。
何やかんや言うても、助けてくれはりますんやから

Yoshinori Kitase, the mastermind behind the modern *Final Fantasy* series, is ready to try something new. After a string of successful traditional RPGs, Kitase's next game is in an entirely new genre: "gun-action RPG," as he calls it. *Dirge of Cerberus*, a part of the pan-media Compilation of *Final Fantasy VII*, mixes elements from action-RPGs and third-person shooters into something rather new.

Dirge's story takes place one year after the events of the CG film *Advent Children*, which itself takes place two years after *Final Fantasy VII*. Our gun-wielding hero, Vincent Valentine, is investigating Deep Ground, a shadowy group of mercenary soldiers. Aiding Vincent is the WRO, or World Recovery Organization, a volunteer group helping to restore a world shattered by Meteo, the meteor whose shock wave wreaked havoc. The WRO is headed by Reeve, a former ally. The forces behind Deep Ground are less clear, but a hulking man named Azul and a mysterious girl with yellow shark eyes are two of the more elite members.

Vincent has three major types of guns at his disposal: fast but weak machine guns, standard handguns, and powerful long-range rifles. Weapons can be upgraded during play by replacing their frames or barrels with stronger pieces. Additional modifications, such as scopes and silencers, can also be attached. If foes get too close, Vincent can punch and kick. And, true to his character's roots, Vincent can trigger a "limit break" that temporarily transforms him into a white-haired monster that hurls magical projectiles.

During our hands-on time with the opening hour of the game, we had no problems moving Vincent through the fair-lined streets, darkened back alleys, and office hallways of Kalm Town. Early on, there's a battle against a helicopter that requires the player to alternate firing with the zoomed-in rifle and taking cover behind walls and crates. Later on, WRO members assist Vincent in clearing the area and rescuing cowering civilians. The player can fire at any time, but pressing R1 puts the camera in a *Resident Evil 4*–style "behind-the-shoulder" perspective, and the gun can be aimed using the right analog stick. Kitase claims this angle was chosen instead of a "true" first-person viewpoint to reduce motion sickness, especially amongst Japanese gamers who may be unfamiliar with first-person shooter titles.

Announced, but not yet playable, was *Dirge*'s online multiplayer mode. Players assume the role of a Deep Ground soldier and challenge other soldiers in battle, earning medals and rising in the ranks. Currently, the team plans to implement free-for-all deathmatch, team versus team, and cooperative mission battles. Mission battles will challenge a group of players to work together to defeat epic-level bosses. Players can earn stronger weapons and armor by fighting successfully, giving a persistent campaign feel to the mode. Kitase hopes that 20 to 30 players will be able to participate in a single battle.

Pub. Square Enix **Dev.** Square Enix **Release** November

FINAL FANTASY XII

NOT MUCH NEW TO SAY—SO WHY ARE WE SO EXCITED?

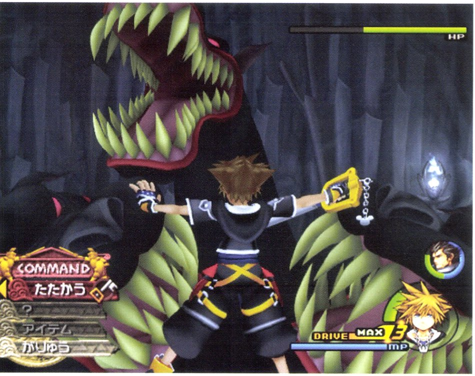
Before *Final Fantasy XII's* grand re-unveiling at Square Enix Party 2005 in Tokyo this past July, speculation ran rampant: Had the characters and setting changed completely? Had battles switched to the active-time battle system? Had the game changed totally beyond recognition?

Answer: No. Though some unexpected staff changeovers delayed development, *Final Fantasy XII* is mostly the same as the last time we saw it, at E3 in May. The good news is that everyone on the project remains committed to Yasumi Matsuno's original vision, and *Final Fantasy XII* is still unlike any previous *Final Fantasy* game.

The cast is unchanged: airship-loving Vaan, warrior princess Ashe, Vaan's girlfriend Penelo, disgraced knight Basch, deadly bunnygirl Fran, and sky pirate Balfear. The world is still Ivalice, the quasi-medieval setting of *Vagrant Story* and *Final Fantasy Tactics*. The battles still take place in real time, directly on the field, with AI-controlled party members—think *Final Fantasy XI*.

New to the demo were powerful summon spells. A summon replaces two party members with a huge guardian beast. Shown were Velius (fire) and Hashmalum (earth)—beasts from Ivalice's pantheon—in lieu of more traditional Ifrit and Titan. *Final Fantasy XII* has a Japanese release date of March 16, 2006, with an American release to follow later in the year.

Pub. Square Enix **Dev.** Square Enix **Release** 2006



KINGDOM HEARTS II

BEAT THE BEAST

Kingdom Hearts is unspeakably popular; in the United States alone it has even outsold *Final Fantasy X*. After 5 million units sold worldwide, director/character designer Tetsuya "Walt" Nomura basically was given a blank check for the sequel.

Nearly every aspect of *Kingdom Hearts II* has been improved from the first game. New stages for every world in the first game (Christmas Town!) are joined by worlds based on *Mulan*, a photo-realistic *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and a black-and-white, retro *Steamboat Willie*. The gameplay's been beefed up, too. Sora can now use context-sensitive attacks against certain foes. Drive allows Sora to temporarily transform into the red, melee-focused Brave Form or the blue, magic-mastering Wisdom Form. Unique combination attacks with every party member add excitement to battles. Party members can now be swapped on the fly, even during boss fights.

Our hands-on test offered a thrilling boss fight in Beast's Castle, a chance to escort a not-so-helpless Minnie through a Heartless-infested Disney Castle, and a trip through the traps of Agrabah's Cave of Wonders. The Square-penned story that pins together the Disney worlds looks more intense than ever, with enigmatic characters like the black-coated members of the XIII taking a prominent role. With almost twice as much content as the first game, *Kingdom Hearts II* looks to be the sequel we've been hoping for.

Pub. Square Enix **Dev.** Square Enix **Release** December

WHAT DO YOU SEE?
CHILDREN?
A PLAYGROUND?
A PARK?
I SEE
MY COMMUNITY
MY COUNTRY
MY FUTURE
AND IT'S ALL WORTH FIGHTING FOR.

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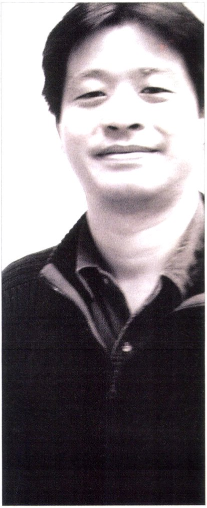
MR. FINAL FANTASY

LEGENDARY FFVII DIRECTOR YOSHINORI KITASE TALKS DIRGE

Few designers have had a greater impact on PlayStation gaming than Yoshinori Kitase. As the director of the wildly popular *Final Fantasy VII*, he helped define and then transcend the RPG genre. His latest opus is *Dirge of Cerberus: Final Fantasy VII*, a decidedly more action-oriented title starring Vincent Valentine from the original *FFVII*. Does this signal a move away from the traditional RPG? Kitase cautions us not to worry: It's all part of the master plan....



OPM Where did the idea to do the Compilation of Final Fantasy VII (the group of new projects based on *FFVII* that includes the games *Before Crisis, Crisis Core,* and *Dirge of Cerberus* and the CG film *Advent Children*) come from?
YOSHINORI KITASE The idea began with *Advent Children*, the movie, which has become the "sequel" to the original story of *VII*. But one title was not enough to cover the entire world of *VII*, so around the same time that *Advent Children* started as a project, the team came up with the ideas of *Before Crisis*, the mobile phone game, and *Dirge of Cerberus*, the PS2 gun-based action game, in order to support the world.

OPM The compilation is a very large undertaking, with four projects in development at the same time. We noticed that the CG movies in *Dirge* use the same models as those in the *Advent Children* movie. Have you been able to share many resources between the projects?
YK Originally, the team expected that there were a lot of things that could be shared between the titles. But actually, it ended up being difficult to share anything. A good example is the design of Vincent in *Advent Children* and *Dirge*. If you look at his hair in *Advent Children*, it's very smooth and beautiful, but in *Dirge*, it's very pointy and animated. [Tetsuya] Nomura did the character design, and he wanted to use a different style for each title. So everything ended up being customized for each title.

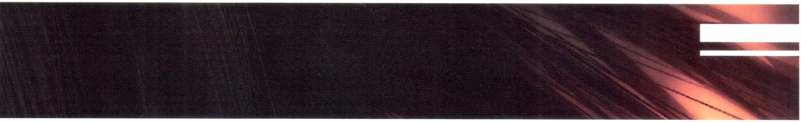
OPM Which came first, the idea to make a *Final Fantasy VII* action game or the idea to use Vincent as a character?
YK First, the team had the idea to make an action game. And second, that was the time when we were starting to think about the Compilation of Final Fantasy VII. In the world of *VII*, Vincent used a gun, it was his signature weapon. So that's why it ended up becoming Vincent's story.

OPM A few years ago, there was a rumor that there was going to be a *Final Fantasy VII* action game, but everyone thought that Cloud was going to be the main character. Vincent is a somewhat unusual choice—he's a secret character, and his backstory is hidden deep within the game. Why not Cloud, Yuffie, or some other "action" character?
YK Of course, *Advent Children* was already in the middle of being made, and in *Advent Children*, people can deeply experience Tifa and Cloud's story. *Advent Children* completes Cloud's story. Also, Cloud doesn't use a gun at all, and the idea was to make a gun game, and that's when Vincent came along. Even though Vincent was a hidden character in the original *VII*, he was very deeply involved with Shinra, Hojo, and Sephiroth. So in a way, he had a lot of drama associated with these other characters.

OPM It's interesting that the Compilation of Final Fantasy VII has four projects, but none of them are traditional RPGs. Was this a conscious decision? Or did it just end up that way?
YK An RPG takes so much time and so many people to create that if the team decided to make one, it would have stood out. It would have needed a lot of preparation and taken a lot of physical and emotional attachment. Instead, the idea was to make original games in the world of *VII*. There were never any plans to make a traditional, hardcore RPG.

OPM The first "sequel" to be set in a *Final Fantasy* world was *Final Fantasy X-2*. A major reason Square made that game was because it was cheap—it could reuse the art, the characters, and the world of *Final Fantasy X*. Even though the compilation uses the same world, the team has had to remake everything from scratch. So why focus on *Final Fantasy VII* at the expense of new projects?
YK *Final Fantasy VII* came out when the PlayStation was introduced and 3D visuals became possible; it was the first title in the franchise to basically create this whole new style. *VII* was a milestone for the franchise and the beginning of a new direction. Until *Final Fantasy XII*, the style of the series came from *VII*. That was one reason.

The second reason is that *VII* is a popular and world-renowned RPG, and there are lots of fans all over the world who have a strong emotional attachment to it. The team



had to do a great amount of preparation so as not to disappoint the fans. When we created *X-2*, we learned how we could make a sequel by reusing resources, but we thought that for *VII*, we had to have a different type of approach—serious projects that would satisfy the fans.

The original staff members of *VII*—such as Naora, the art director; Uematsu, the composer; Nojima, the scenario writer; and Nomura, the character designer—were all working on different projects when this compilation plan came up. But they were able to gather again to work together. It would be kind of nonsensical to have a whole new team create a sequel for *VII*, but we thought it would be possible now that the original members were gathering together to create it. The titles would be good enough not to embarrass the team, the company, or the fans.

> "THE IDEA WAS TO MAKE ORIGINAL GAMES IN THE WORLD OF VII."

OPM Some American fans were offended by the very silly tone of *Final Fantasy X-2*. Did the team ever think about making a silly *Final Fantasy VII* game?

YK No, but it might have made for a funny story if we had Cait Sith as a main character.

Before *X-2*, *Final Fantasy* was already established as a franchise that fans expected to be very serious. Because of that pressure, the team always had to protect themselves; they couldn't be as creative as they might like, and they didn't have the freedom to come up with something different.

If you look back, the original *Final Fantasy* games were funny and silly, but eventually, the franchise became nothing but seriousness. *X-2* made the team remember that there're lots of possibilities within *Final Fantasy*. Because of *X-2*, we had the freedom to choose what we wanted to do for the compilation. If there were no *X-2*, we could only ever think of making a pure, perfect RPG.

OPM You've said in the past that making *Final Fantasy X* was very difficult, but making *X-2* was very fun. What sort of feeling do you have making *Dirge*?

YK It's still on the PS2, so technologically it's been very smooth, but it's the first time the team has made a gun-based action game. We already know from experience how to make a good RPG, so we know what kind of reaction to expect from the fans. But with an action game, we've had to start all the way from just making it simple to control. Because it's our first game in this genre, we're always going back and forth on every decision.

OPM Reeve (who controls Cait Sith) appears in *Dirge*. What's the story behind his uniform?

YK Those are just his clothes.

OPM Oh. Well, Reeve is heading up the WRO (World Recovery Organization). Can you tell us about the group?

YK It's a volunteer organization trying to restore the world after Meteo messed it up in *VII*. Originally, their purpose was to go to different destroyed towns and help them recover. But in *Dirge*, enemies show up, so the members of WRO form a volunteer army.

OPM And the big blue guy, Azul? He seems to be the main villain....

YK He's not the absolute strongest enemy or boss in the game. There's a group of enemies, the Deep Ground soldiers, and Azul is one of the strongest elite soldiers within the group. Originally, Deep Ground was just a group of soldiers that were all at the same level. Eventually, fighting within the group led to some soldiers becoming stronger, more elite, while others became inferior. In the online mode, these soldiers fight against each other.

OPM How do you earn medals in the online ranking mode?

YK There are lots of conditions. For example, a player who was the MVP of a battle might get a medal. And someone who performed poorly in a battle might get a bad medal.

OPM Do the medals affect your character's ability? Or are they just for show?

YK They don't give bonus points or anything like that.

OPM In an online game, it's important to maintain a level field. But in *Dirge's* online mode, you can earn weapons and armor that improve your character. How will a new character be able to fight against a character with strong equipment?

YK Players can set conditions for battles, such as restricting the use of strong weapons or restricting a match to only powerful players. But there's no way to control if one player has a strong weapon and they fight against somebody weaker.

OPM What kind of online gameplay modes will be available?

YK There are three modes: team versus team, free-for-all deathmatch, and mission mode, where a team fights against a boss.

OPM Has the team size been decided yet?

YK We have to wait for the results of the beta test, but it's going to be about 20 to 30 players on both teams together.

OPM Hironobu Sakaguchi, who started the *Final Fantasy* series, recently left Square to start a new company, Mistwalker. His company is making two RPGs for the Xbox 360. How do you feel about competing on next-generation consoles against the father of *Final Fantasy*?

YK I sometimes go out to eat with Sakaguchi, so we have a good relationship. His message for me is something like, "Let's improve each other's quality. Let's grow up together and complete each other's work."

Before Square Enix was Square Enix—when it was still Squaresoft—there were multiple key titles within the company, so the teams were sort of competing with each other to make better games than the rest. So a culture like that already existed.

That culture's been extended after Sakaguchi left. Our intention is still to make good games that impress each other. If you look at the market in Japan, it's somewhat saturated, so it's good to have a rival that stimulates you to do your best. That's our relationship. «

YOSHINORI KITASE Resume

1990
SWORD OF MANA
Planner

1992
ROMANCING SAGA
Maps

1993
FINAL FANTASY V
Field Planner

1995
CHRONO TRIGGER
Director

1996
FINAL FANTASY VI
Codirector

1997
FINAL FANTASY VII
Director and writer

1998
EHRGEIZ, staff
FINAL FANTASY VII, staff

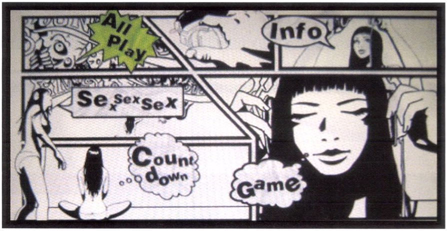
1999
FINAL FANTASY VIII
Director

2001
FINAL FANTASY X
Producer

2002
KINGDOM HEARTS
Coproducer

2003
FINAL FANTASY X-2
Producer

2004
KINGDOM HEARTS: CHAIN OF MEMORIES
Coproducer



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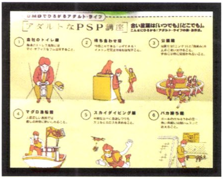

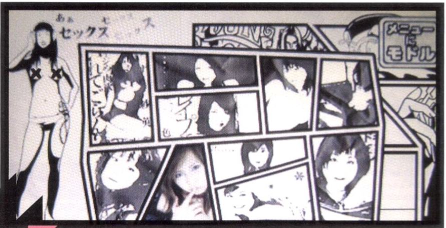

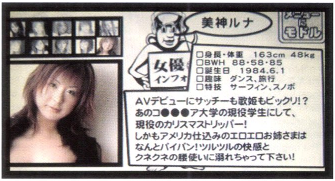

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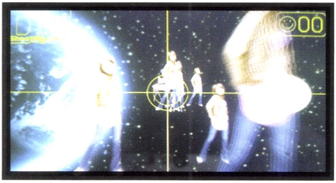

J-TOWN

BOOBIES MAKE THE (TECH) WORLD GO ROUND

The killer application driving every new technological advance is pornography. This maxim has the dual benefit of being not only pithy but true. Early adopters of home video were among the first to enjoy adult cinema outside of sticky public theaters. When the porn industry threw its weight behind the cheaper VHS format, ignoring Sony's better but pricier Betamax, home video's future was sealed. Camcorders allowed people to direct (and star) in their own adult films. DVDs served up digital clarity, multiple angles, and perhaps most important, the ability to skip past laborious minutes of talking. And anyone who's spent more than 10 minutes on the Internet hardly needs to be told that it contains photographs and videos of denuded women. With anonymity and no physical evidence for a significant other to find, adult entertainment has firmly entrenched itself as the most profitable form of online business.

Sony's PSP is obviously technologically superior to Nintendo's DS—but then again, so was Betamax. With so much at stake in the handheld arena, Sony has chosen to bring out the big guns...as it were. Not Sony itself, of course; most multinational conglomerates avoid the spotlight in these sorts of matters. But Sony has chosen to look the other way as distributors ship titles like *The Palace of a Virgin*, *Big-Breasted Nurse*, and *HMP Countdown 2005 Polar Star Popular Idol BEST 10*.

The amusingly acronymed HMP has quickly established itself as the PSP's top-tier smut peddler. It has even distributed a handy flyer to stores showing a satisfied customer enjoying the company's portable pornography in various locales: waiting for a date to arrive, skydiving, and stuck on a tuna fishing boat miles away from a loved one. Always striving to stay on the cutting edge of the PlayStation world, I braved the back alleys of Shibuya in search of some UMD pornography. I ended up purchasing the aforementioned *Polar Star* countdown disc: 10 girls and 120 minutes of pixelated pornography on a single UMD.

Somewhat surprisingly, these discs are reference-quality UMD video discs, superior to anything put out by the major studios. The Main menu uses a manga-style layout with animated menu elements. Viewers can choose Info (biographies and stats for each girl), Sex Sex Sex (single girl selection from another manga-style menu), Countdown (a top-10-style countdown of the girls, complete with a fluidly animated virtual hostess), All Play (the countdown followed by the 10 girls in order), and Game.

Game is an almost unplayable shooter in which girls with large targets on their crotches fly toward the camera. The player controls a pair of crosshairs that fire—wait for it—animated sperm at these poor cardboard cutouts of femininity.

HITTING TARGETS RESULTS IN A SMALL COO OF PLEASURE.

Hitting targets results in a small coo of pleasure; after a set number of girls have flown onscreen, the game ends. The gameplay is as crude as the intergender relations, but HMP still deserves credit for being the first company to stick an actual PSP game on a UMD video disc. Imagine if the *Tron* UMD came with the classic arcade lightcycle game or the *Advent Children* UMD came with an original Square minigame. When comparing movie DVDs and UMDs, DVDs almost always come out ahead in price and features. Even simple games from concerned studios could go a long way toward differentiating the UMD format. UMD movies with a licensed PSP game could include a demo on the disc.

In a final ironic twist, most of these pornographic video titles are available for 1,800 yen (half the price of other PSP movies) and are All Code, meaning they can be played on any PSP. Though the content may be behind-the-counter, the value is top-shelf. « *Andrew Vestal*

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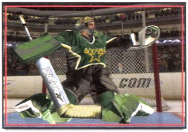

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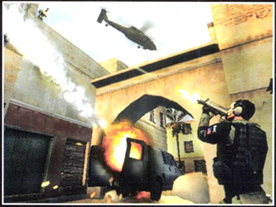

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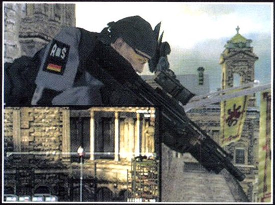

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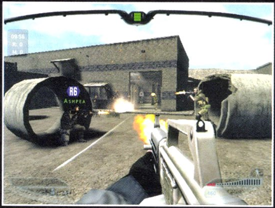

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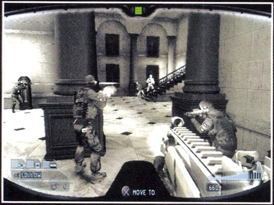

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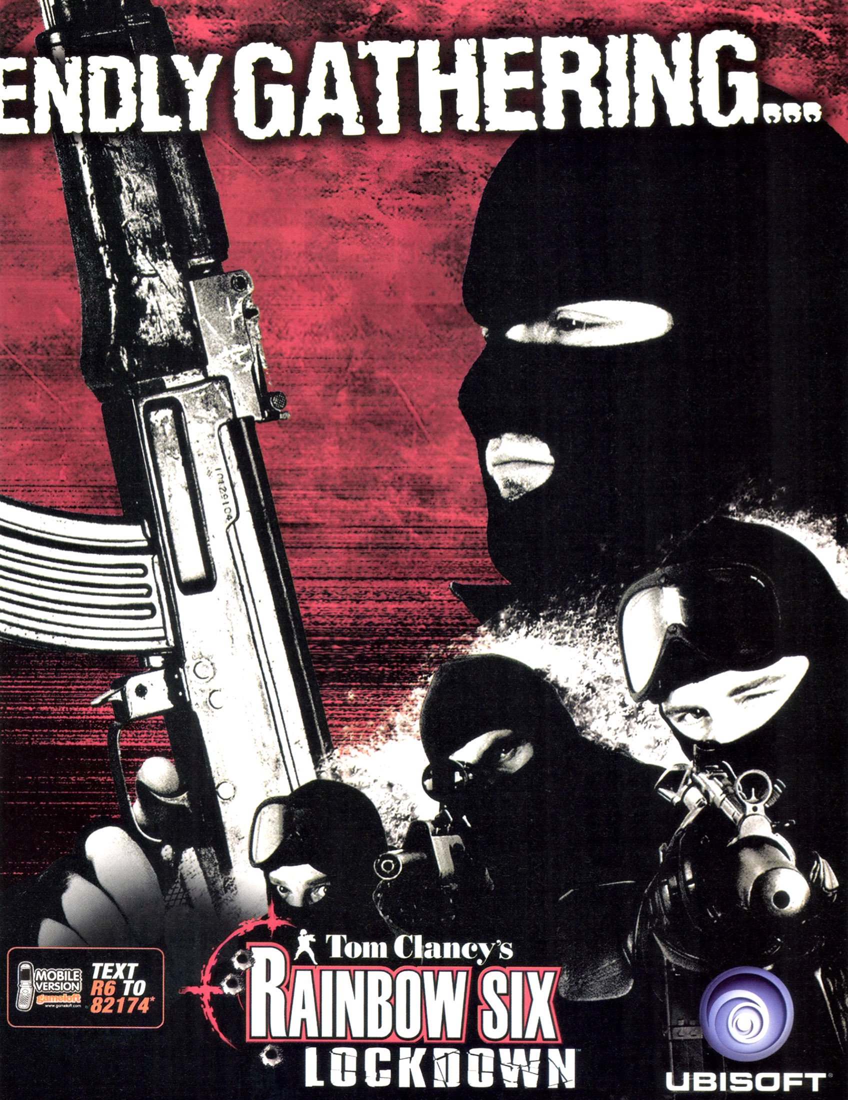
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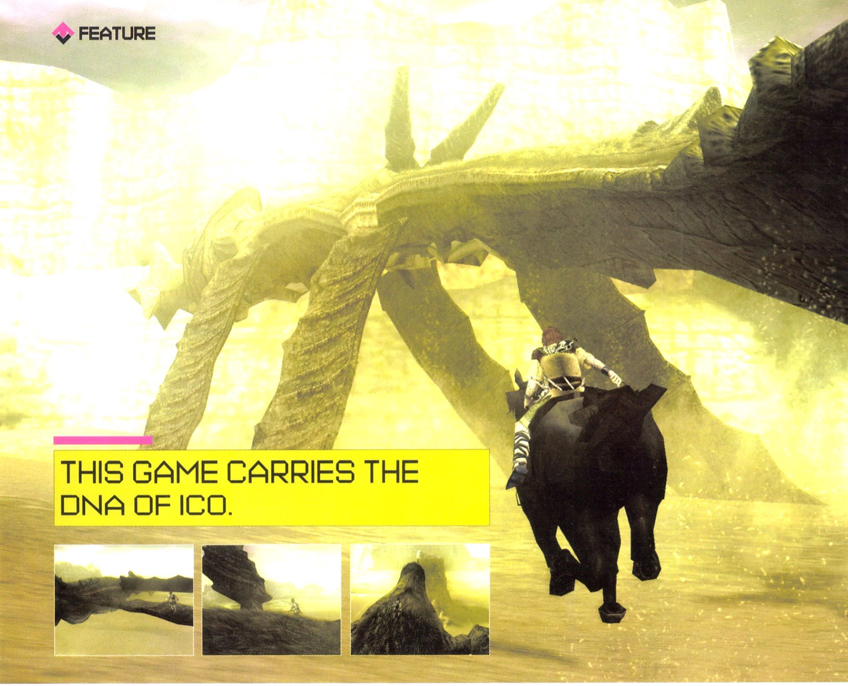
A GIANT IN THE MAKING

HOW SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS CAME TO BE

BY JAMES MIELKE AND JOE RYBICKI

Rarely does a game come wrapped in as much anticipation and mystique as Sony's towering *Shadow of the Colossus*, but then again, it's not that often that a game follows in the footsteps of a critically acclaimed fan favorite like *Ico*. Gossamer, gamine, and gaunt, the *Ico* experience expanded the notion of what you could expect from a videogame. Artistic, atmospheric, and absolutely brilliant to play, *Ico* enchanted gamers around the world with its winsome duo of Ico and Yorda and their storybook brand of adventure. This particular experiment in minimalist game design gained *Ico* a fanatic, hardcore following, and the pressure on the development team to match that game's stylistic verve with something equally stunning began to grow. But then again, Fumito Ueda's Team Ico is no average development team.



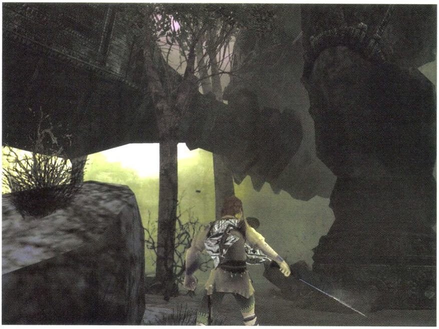
THIS GAME CARRIES THE DNA OF ICO.

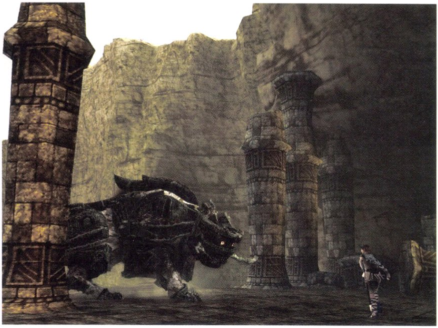
In the works for nearly four years now, *Shadow of the Colossus* is clearly the result of different thinking. While Western development teams try to one-up each other in terms of how big their guns are, how interactive their environments can be, how urban their attitude is, and how much their X-treme soundtracks rock, Ueda's studio is cutting its game from an entirely different cloth. One look at *Shadow* and you'll realize that this game carries the DNA of *Ico*, from its sun-soaked environments to its minimal cast of characters to its austere "level" design. But while the majority of *Ico*'s discovery and puzzle-solving elements are confined within the walls of a finite space (a castle), *Shadow of the Colossus*, shall we say, branches out.

At the start of the game (it quickly becomes easy to forget you're playing a game, thanks to the minimal, unobtrusive interface), our unnamed hero brings his fallen lover to a temple at the end of the world, in the hopes of reviving her by restoring her soul. At the instruction of the dormir (an ancient race of mysterious, godlike spirits), our hero, his horse (Agro), and his "ancient sword" are sent hurtling into motion, with the specific goal of tracking down and toppling a staggeringly immense series of colossi, the giant, skyscraping behemoths of the game's title.

While the parallels between *Shadow of the Colossus* and *Ico* are many (See "David and Goliath: Where Paths Converge" on page 88), perhaps the most compelling parallel is how *Shadow* once again pushes game design in areas no one else has ever dreamed of. *Shadow* throws out the rule book on level design in particular. Burgeoning developers, take note: Here's a game that doesn't ask you to 1) collect items, 2) find coins, 3) butt-stomp enemies, 4) shoot barrels, 5) push blocks (even *Ico* has a little of that), 6) level up, or 7) go all Solid Snake when you really don't need to. Instead, *Shadow*'s hero has three surprisingly simple goals: find the bosses, climb the bosses, and beat the bosses. That's it. OK, so there's a little bit more to it than that, like riding Agro around the breathtakingly expansive vistas to hunt for each boss, and using the ancient sword to pinpoint it. See, as you stampede over the horizon with the wind in your hair, pressing the Circle button holds up the ancient sword, and the reflected light shines most brightly in the direction where the next boss encounter will be found. A few presses of the X button will propel Agro even faster across the plains. The closer you get to a colossus, the brighter the sword shines, and once you've reached the appropriate landmark, a cut-scene will herald your arrival, usually with a hint of what you're in for.

The next course of action is to navigate whatever path the game has laid out before you in order to actually reach the boss, whether it's as simple as climbing a small rock wall or something entirely more devious. The controls are simple enough, with jump and grab functions easily managed via a few button presses. Once you've paid the obligatory price of environmental navigation required to meet the boss, the core of the game's experience finally presents itself to you.



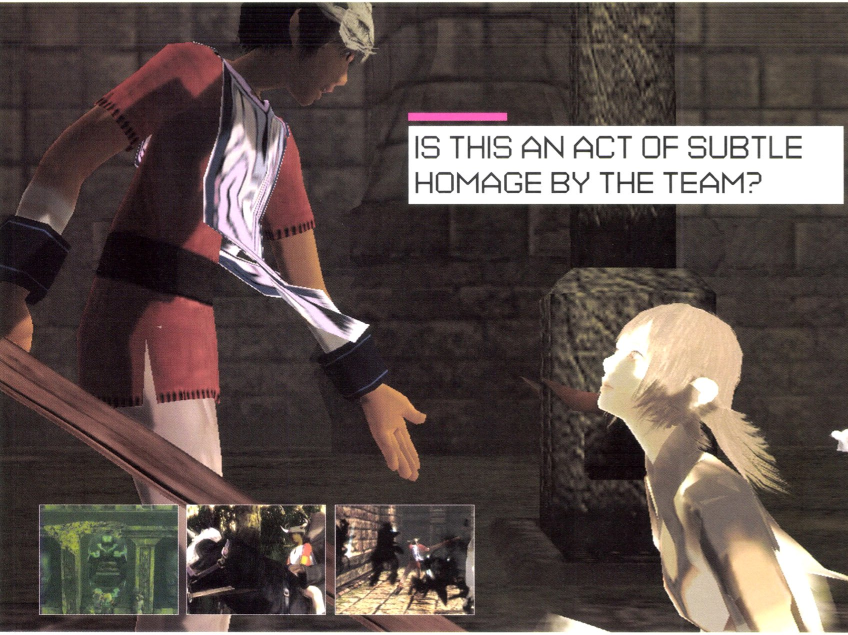


HISTORY LESSON
Colossi, which are gigantic statues, were extremely popular in ancient Greece. The most famous one was the Colossus of Rhodes, which was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It was completed in 282 BC, after 12 years of construction. However, an earthquake in 226 BC caused the Colossus to topple.

In no other game is the boss the be-all and end-all quite like it is in *Shadow*. While it may not really occur to you while playing, *Shadow* has no enemies but the colossi. Most games find you slapping away at a stream of anonymous thugs in between the start and the climactic boss encounter to provide the frisson the game might otherwise lack. In what is perhaps testament to Ueda's team's ability to coax the player out of such clichéd comfort zones, here you never really notice the fact that you're simply moving from boss to boss. It's a whole new type of challenge that is so engrossing that the simple process of mounting your good steed and soldiering across vast, sun-blasted fields to conquer giants in the hopes of reviving the love of your life is more than enough. With *Ico*, Ueda's team designed by subtraction, meaning the developers created a game reduced to its most essential, playable elements while retaining just enough to convey the emotional impact of the story. With *Shadow of the Colossus*, the team took a few measured steps forward, adding some new mechanics to the game to create a richer, more involved experience.

Despite its still relatively simplistic design, *Shadow of the Colossus* is not lightweight. As you put the main character through his paces, first propelling him with purpose to the lumbering colossi, then clambering over whatever obstacles lie in his path, and finally hunting down and climbing up his nemesis, a certain gravity takes hold of your senses. In order to "save" the girl, you must kill each colossus, which in turn destroys an idol back at the shrine (an idol that cannot be broken by human hands), which then releases the colossus' soul, which—ultimately—is supposed to revive your loved one little by little. Throughout this process, though, it slowly but surely begins to dawn on you that these giants have done nothing to harm you. And as you grab them by their fur while you climb their backs and rest on the bizarre platforms jutting out of their bodies, before ultimately finding their exposed weakness (typically a glowing spot on their head) and driving your sword into their brain, you realize in an odd way that what you're doing isn't as chivalrous and magnificent as you thought it would be when you first set out. Why exactly do you need to kill the otherwise-harmless colossi, who were really minding their own business until you came along? Well, that's the payoff for you to discover on your own, but let us say that it's a journey well worth taking. If you value those special moments in the time line of gaming history, you'll want to say "I was there" for *Shadow of the Colossus*.

IN NO OTHER GAME IS THE BOSS THE BE-ALL IT IS HERE.



IS THIS AN ACT OF SUBTLE HOMAGE BY THE TEAM?

DAVID AND GOLIATH

WHERE PATHS CONVERGE

Anyone who plays *Shadow of the Colossus* and has also played *Ico* will find many parallels between the two games. Is this an act of subtle homage on the part of the development team, or is it sheer coincidence manifested from the collective subconscious of the creative minds responsible for both titles? We'll let you be the judge, but in the interest of comparison, we've pulled out a few of the most glaring examples of how *Shadow of the Colossus* truly stands in the shadow of *Ico.*

THE WALLS ARE ALIVE

Although you don't realize it at the beginning of *Ico*, the myriad sarcophagi that line the walls of the room that *Ico* first finds himself in are actually the coffins of all the Ico-like boys that were banished there before him. At the beginning of *Shadow of the Colossus*, you see a similar—but not quite as extensive—collection of totems lining the walls. These totems actually represent the living colossi (don't worry, this isn't a spoiler, as it's explained at the beginning of the game) and will shatter one by one as you defeat the giant bosses.

A HORSE OF COURSE

While you never get to gallop around on a horse yourself in *Ico*, the opening of the game finds the villagers from Ico's town leading him on horseback to his final destination. In fact, the path to the castle where the villagers eventually abandon him lies through the surrounding woods. *Shadow* begins in the same manner, with a cinema of the hero quietly leading Agro through the woods to what eventually becomes the shrine where he rests his fallen beauty, whom he had brought to the temple draped over the back of the horse.

SHADOWY BEINGS

The prime source of conflict in *Ico*, besides the environmental puzzles, are the smoky beings that erupt from the ground to try and take Yorda back to her mother. Since Ico is a young boy armed only with a stick, trying to fight off these ethereal creatures is often a nerve-racking experience. *Shadow* provides a taste of this at the start of the game, as similar creatures emerge from the cobblestones, only to be driven back by the blazing light from the hero's sword. A thematic similarity or total coincidence? You decide.

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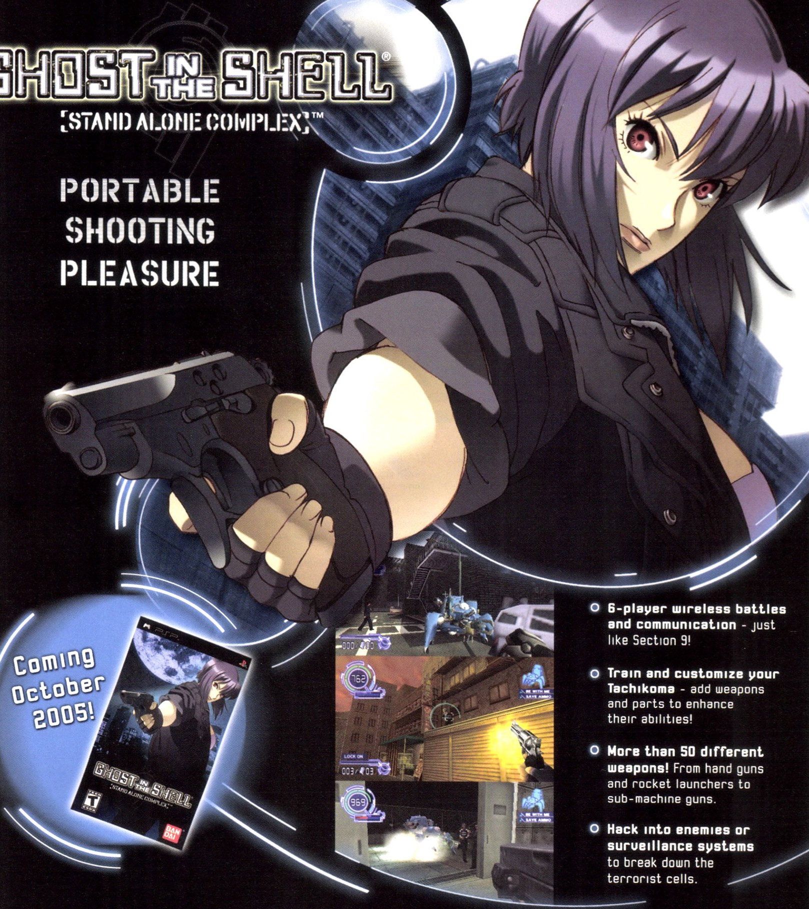

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GIANT STEPS

COLOSSUS' DIRECTOR CASTS A VERY LONG SHADOW

As lead artist and director of *Shadow of the Colossus*, Fumito Ueda is the driving force behind this beautiful, remarkable game—and its predecessor, *Ico*. We sat down with Ueda to discuss the past, present, and future of game design.

OPM You developed *Ico* using a "design by subtraction" philosophy, resulting in a game that's simple, pure, and evocative. Your approach to *Shadow of the Colossus* seems a bit more involved than that. Please describe to us your motivation behind *Shadow*'s mechanics and design.
FUMITO UEDA With *Ico*, the player did not have much freedom, which is a common issue with many stage-clear type adventure games. So I wanted to give my next title a higher level of freedom, give the player more influence. On a small scale, this means that the player's skills make things happen in the world. On a larger scale, it means creating opportunities for things to happen that the designers didn't expect. But I am always conscious of people who do not play videogames. I want those people to accept my games. For that reason, I like to simplify controls and other gameplay elements as much as possible.

OPM How did you create such a dramatic sense of scale with the colossi?
FU In order to realistically portray humongous colossi, you have to limit their speed in relation to their size. If the speed is increased, the scale gets decreased and the colossi seem light. Therefore, they cannot move too fast. However, if the speed of all the colossi is the same, there's no variety in gameplay, so we needed to change the size of them a bit and increase the speed for variety's sake. That's why there are differences in size among colossi.

OPM What sort of criteria did you establish for designing the colossi? Some are large human-shaped creatures, some are insect-like, and others are like animals. Is there any common thread beyond the fact that they're enormous?
FU I avoided designs that made it obvious what the motive was, so I combined various things, like the front of a car or the surface of a building. Normally, things like that aren't used for monster design. By doing so, I thought that colossi would have peculiarities, yet seem realistic at the same time.

OPM *Shadow* seems much darker than *Ico*, often almost overwhelmingly gray at times. Was this a deliberate method of distinguishing your new game from past works, or are there any other goals you are trying to achieve through lighting?
FU That is the setting of this world. People are afraid to get near this land. I also wanted to emphasize the lonely hero. However, there are some glittering scenes, like *Ico* has—we just haven't disclosed them.

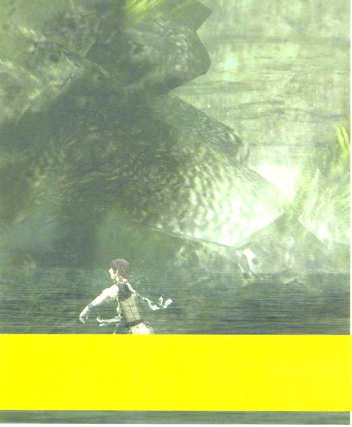
OPM Why did you decide to put the main character on a horse for much of the game? We realize there are large distances to cross, so is this the only reason, or was there a greater design decision involved?
FU There are many reasons. A horse is a convenient ride, but also I felt drawn to its obedient and adorable existence—it's like a friend—and because it is visually attractive compared to other vehicles. Also, it is a self-supporting vehicle; when you need to focus on attacking colossi and you're not paying attention to which direction you have to go, the horse will choose the right path for you. Another good example is when you come to a cliff and the horse will stop so that you will not fall off and die.

"I AIM TO DESIGN SIMPLE GAMES."

OPM The sword is an interesting element in the game, since you have to use it to track down the various colossi. Where did this idea come from?
FU I aim to design simple games. There are no villagers who give you hints. The only clue is the light that comes from the sword. I wanted a clue that was direct and only expressible visually.

OPM What is the most important part, if you had to pick one, of the *Shadow* experience? Visuals? Sound? Control?
FU It is hard to pick only one, as I am trying to create atmosphere by combining all the elements, but if I had to choose, I would say visuals. It's no exaggeration to say that my game design is all about visuals. Of course, it also includes how good it feels to control! I have visuals in mind and then think what kind of game design I need to realize the visuals.

OPM For quite some time, due to various images leaked out on the Internet, many fans thought you were working on a sequel to *Ico*, called *Nico*. Did those images of horned horseback riders have anything to do with *Shadow*?



FU Yes, *Shadow of the Colossus* is *Nico*. There are parts that were changed, but the grab, climb, and fight elements, which are the main parts of the game design, are unchanged.

OPM Some cynics complained that the combat in *Ico* was too simplistic. Do you feel the game was underappreciated?
FU *Ico*'s battles were just one way to create situations in which the player protects the girl. I thought that the battles should not require the player to be very skilled. However, there is no accounting for tastes, so I don't think about which opinion is right or wrong. Ideally, we would like to create games that satisfy everyone.

OPM The Japanese cover of *Ico* is a clever homage to the surrealist painter Giorgio de Chirico. Was *Ico* inspired by de Chirico?
FU I designed the Japanese cover, and I thought the surrealistic world of de Chirico matched the allegoric world of *Ico*.

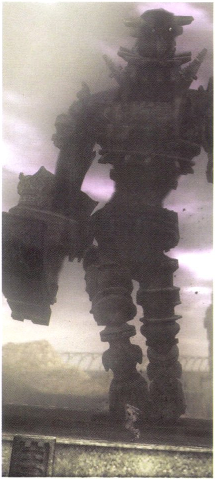
OPM Are there any links that we're missing between *Ico* and *Shadow of the Colossus*?
FU No comment!

OPM Of your contemporaries, no one seems to be designing games remotely similar to yours. Are there any games out there that you particularly enjoy? *Katamari Damacy* perhaps?
FU Mr. [Keita] Takahashi, who designed *Katamari Damacy*, is one of the few friends that I have in the industry. Of course, I enjoyed the sequel, too. My other favorite games from last year include *Half-Life 2* and *Burnout 3*. Recently, I enjoyed *God of War*.

OPM How have the hardware advancements since the 32-bit days affected your ability to design games?
FU It all comes down to expressing detail. I don't think processing power is all there is when it comes to expressing feelings, but I think the hardware advancements made it easier.

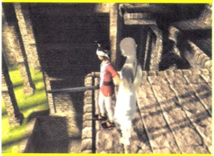
OPM Are you excited for the PlayStation 3 because of what it will offer you as a game developer?
FU I am hoping that it will get rid of all the current limits on character detail. However, I need a stable development environment, since I do not compromise on character detail. So I am hoping to have more than enough time to study—otherwise, I will need another long development period!

OPM What can we expect from the future of your team?
FU I would like to continue making games I myself want to play.



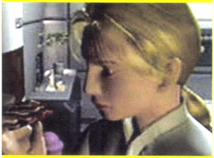
GAMEOGRAPHY

TRACKING THE HERITAGE OF SHADOW THROUGH THE FOOTPRINTS OF THE PAST



ICO

Lauded at the 2002 Game Developers Conference with numerous Game Developers Choice Awards (it won for Excellence in Level Design, Excellence in Visual Arts, and Game Innovation, and was nominated for Game of the Year, Original Game Character of the Year, and Excellence in Game Design), *Ico* set an amazing number of high-water marks for a debut title. But for the next three years, Fumito Ueda's team at Sony Computer Entertainment Japan Product Development worked in secrecy on its next project, at one point rumored to be the sequel to *Ico* (thought to be titled "*Nico*," a play on words involving "ni," the Japanese word for "two," and "*Ico*") but ultimately revealed to be much, much more.



ENEMY ZERO

This classic Sega Saturn game (released in 1997 in North America) wasn't done by the *Ico* team, but it did feature the work of Team Ico's Fumito Ueda, who provided both enemy (not that you could really see the enemy, more like hear the enemy) and visual design. *Enemy Zero*'s *Alien*-like interior levels and its hallways, reminiscent of *Doom* in space, gave little indication of the hazy, brightly saturated lighting that would appear in both *Ico* and *Shadow of the Colossus*, but its avant-garde approach to game design certainly did. Cold, calculating, and terrifying, *Enemy Zero* worked an entirely different set of senses, taking excellent advantage of the primitive platform's strengths in the embryonic era of 3D gaming.

PLAY IT YOURSELF

COME FACE-TO-FACE WITH A COLOSSUS IN THIS MONTH'S DEMO

Here's your chance to see for yourself what all the fuss is about. There's only one colossus in this demo, but there's lots of room—and lots of time—to explore. Keep in mind, though, that this demo came from this past May's E3. The controls, graphics, framerate, and effects have all been dramatically improved in the months since then.

THE BASICS

Before you head out to slay that colossus, we need to tell you about that pink circle on the screen. This is your energy meter. When your character is hanging on to a climbable surface, the meter will deplete over time; if the pink disappears, you fall. This circle also indicates the strength of your stabbing attacks. Hit Square while holding R1 and a white circle will grow in the energy meter. The bigger the circle, the stronger the stabbing attack, and as the white circle reaches the edge of the energy meter, the meter will glow, signifying the strongest possible attack. But don't wait too long: Shortly after this moment, the white circle disappears, leaving you with a moderately weak attack.

THE COLOSSUS

Time to saddle up. |1| Get on your horse and ride out of the temple. Hold up your sword (by pressing Circle) and observe the rays emanating from your blade. Move the target around and you'll see the rays get more or less focused. You want to head toward the point with the tightest focus. Once there, |2| abandon your horse and |3| navigate the simple climbing course up to the top of the cliff. It's colossus time.

|4| Being the first colossus, Mr. Minotaur here is the simplest. First, run to his left hind leg, jump up, and grab on to the fur. |5| Pull yourself up a bit and stab him a couple times in the calf; he'll drop to one knee. |6| Jump to the ledges on his left hamstring and |7| pull yourself up to the platform on his lower back. |8| Rest here to recharge your energy. |9| Now jump to the ledge between the platforms on his middle back and then jump again to grab on to his back fur. He will start trying to throw you off at this point, so just hang on and wait for the shimmy-shimmy to stop.

|10| Once you get up to his shoulder, rest again to recharge your grip. Then head for the endgame—the head. |11| Climb up on top of his brainpan, where you'll see the blue sigil signifying his weak spot (you do have your sword out, right?). |12| Get positioned and stab him. Oh, he didn't like that, did he? Just hang on and wait for him to calm down a little, then repeat. A few good strong stabs should do it. |13| And that's the end of him—and of the demo.

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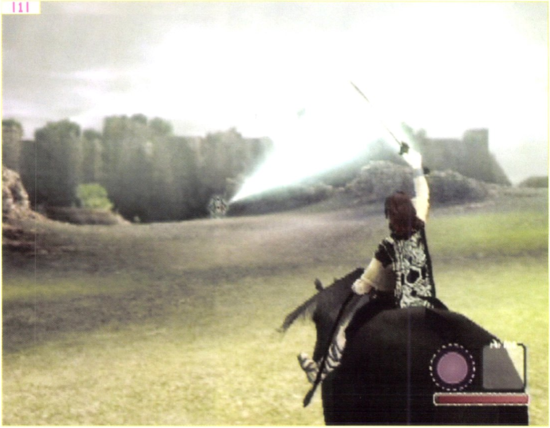

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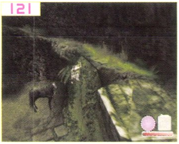

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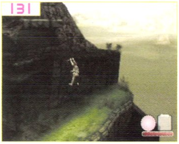

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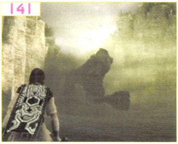

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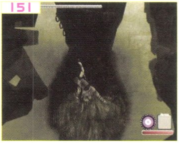

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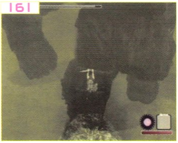

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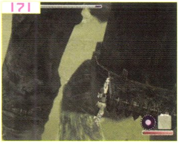

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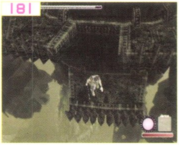

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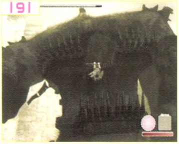

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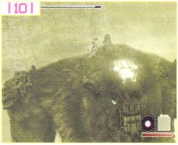

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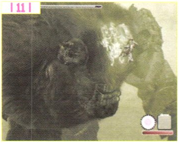

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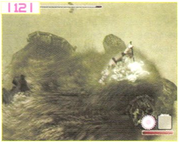

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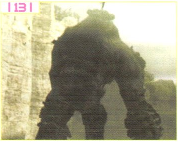

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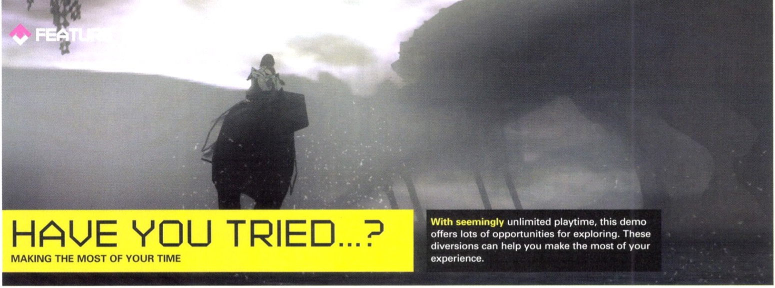

HAVE YOU TRIED…?

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR TIME

With seemingly unlimited playtime, this demo offers lots of opportunities for exploring. These diversions can help you make the most of your experience.

GO WHERE YOU'RE NOT WANTED

Most pathways to the larger world are blocked off in one way or another, limiting you to the area between the central temple and the one colossus in the demo. Or are they? Northwest of the temple is a bridge that the developers appear to have forgotten to break. You can explore much of the area across that bridge, but don't stray too far from the central temple or the demo may crash. Just hit Start to return to the Main menu.

TAKE A DIP

After crossing this forbidden bridge, bear left and follow the cliff's edge until you come to a ramp heading downward. Make a 180-degree turn to continue down and you'll end up at the shore of a small inland lake. You can't swim across the whole thing, but you can get deep enough to check out the neat water effects. Hold down R1 to dive.

TAKE A DIVE

Above the beach is one of the broken bridges. Head about halfway out from the beach side, until you're just above the outermost breaking waves, and jump off.

STUPID HORSE TRICKS

Try these while on your mount.

- From a standstill, hit X and press Down on the left analog stick simultaneously.
- While moving, hold Down on the left analog stick and hit X.
- Hold R1.
- Hold R1 and press Up on the left analog stick.
- Direct your horse off a low ledge (it will shy away if the ledge is too high).

STUPID CINEMA TRICKS

Move the right analog stick during any cinema and the camera will shift perspective. Hold R2 and the camera zooms in.

TOP OF THE WORLD, MA!

We probably shouldn't be telling you this, but there's this interesting little quirk in the demo: If you jump at an angle while hanging from a ledge, vines, or whatever, you don't expend any of your grip strength. This would make it possible to climb an infinitely tall climbable surface. Not that we're saying any such surface exists. But if it did, you could climb it. And if you saw, you know, a ledge or something nearby, you could probably jump to it. And if you were really good at platforming and were willing to take a couple leaps of faith, you might even be able to get up to a very secret, obviously unfinished location. Too bad such a location does not exist.

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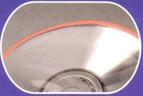

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